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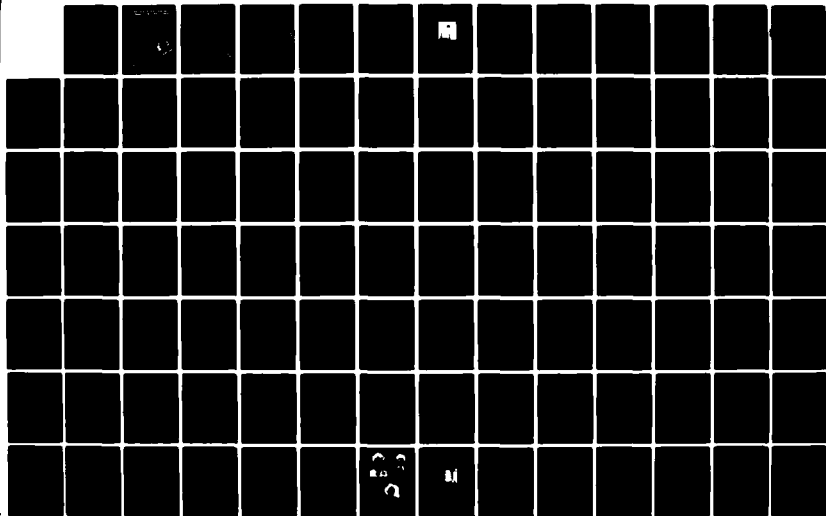
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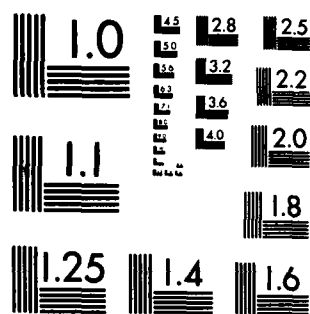
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# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC TOWNSITES PROJECT

AD A127392

Volume 4  
(Interview Numbers 117-122)



Compiled by:  
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and  
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APR 20 1983

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<b>16. Abstract (Limit 200 words)</b> The Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project program in oral history is one aspect of an interdisciplinary research effort in the study of the extinct nineteenth century townsites of Colbert, Barton and Vinton, Mississippi. Oral historical research was conducted in conjunction with archaeological and documentary investigations between October 1979 and August 1980. Research and interviews focused on eastern Clay County and the southern portion of Monroe County, Mississippi in an effort to gather resource data pertaining to lifeways, material culture, social organization, settlement patterns and numerous related topics. The transcriptions in these volumes are the product of the initial phases of data collection and have been processed in a manner designed to make the data accessible to a large audience. Included are biographical sketches of informants, transcriptions of taped interviews edited by the interviewers and corrected by the informants, photographs of people and places in the study area, and informants' sketch maps and drawings of structures on the townsites. Volume eight contains an index of topics adapted from the Yale Human Relations Area Files Cultural Materials Outline, as well as a separate index of persons who appear in the text.				
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TOMBIGBEE HISTORIC TOWNSITES PROJECT  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

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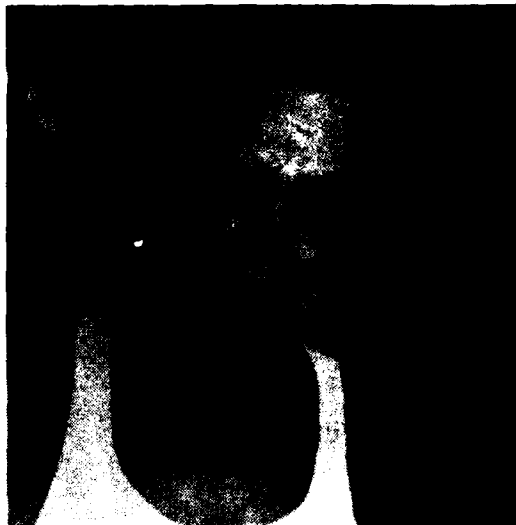


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THTP - Oral History Interview OH 117  
Interviews with  
James "Honeybee" Hendrix

conducted and edited by  
James M. McClurken



Honeybee Hendrix was born in Clay County, Mississippi in 1911. As a child, he lived in the Knox Hill community, three miles west of Vinton. When his mother died, he boarded with several longtime Barton and Vinton residents while he finished his elementary education at the Vinton School. Mr. Hendrix's contact with persons in the Vinton community and his natural curiosity have made him one of our most important sources of information about structures associated with Vinton and Barton.

The interviews conducted with Mr. Hendrix on February 3, 1980, February 9, 1980, and June 6, 1980 were recorded in his home by James McClurken. The interview recorded on February 24, 1980 was conducted on the sites of Barton and Vinton. Present at the session were James McClurken, Leah Allen, Dean Anderson, Lilly Hendrix, and Stephen McBride.

M: This is an interview with Mr. James "Honeybee" Hendrix for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place at his home. The address is Route 2, Box 416, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The date is February 3, 1980. Mr. Hendrix's telephone number is 494-7271.

Mr. Hendrix, can you list some of the people who lived at Waverly?

H: Let's see. Bonds lived in the old Hamilton home. I believe that Moore lived in the Hamilton home before Bonds moved to Waverly. Moore owned and operated a sawmill about a mile north of Waverly. George Y. Banks was in charge of the Young estate at the time. He married one of Colonel Young's daughters. Things had come around to where he was administrator of the Colonel Young estate. Charlie Funderburke lived on the Henderson Lee place which is now owned by Douglas Ivy.

M: Have you ever heard of the Cox place?

H: Yes. The Cox place, if it is the same one, is up towards the Vinton Community, north of Town Creek. It would be just east of the Zack Ellis place, on the Barton Ferry Road. The Cox place is south of the Barton Ferry Road. I think that at one time, it bordered from Barton Ferry Road back down into Town Creek Bottom.

M: Do you know how long ago that was?

H: I'll soon be seventy years old, and that place had changed hands way before I was born.

M: Is it on the south of the river?

H: It is on the south side of the river, in the Barton Ferry Community.

M: Can you tell me about the Rose Plantation?

H: The Rose Plantation is west of Waverly. It belonged to Martin Rose. Originally, what they now call the Rose Plantation was two plantations, the Martin estate and the Rose estate. Martin owned the south side of what is now the Rose Plantation, south of what is now Waverly Road and on from there to Tibbee Creek. Rose owned the land between the Lower Waverly Road back to the Prairie Waverly Road which is part of Highway 50. About seven miles east of West Point, it goes by what is called the Crusoe place. Rose owned from the Crusoe place south to the Lower Waverly Road, which was approximately two miles. Both places went back east and were about a mile and a half wide at the widest part. Rose had a boy and Martin had a daughter. Eventually the Rose boy married the Martin girl, and for years that was called the Martin-Rose place. Later they went to calling it the Rose place.

The south side of the place down there is the part that Martin owned. He built a two-story log house. That was built out of hand-hewed white-oak logs. There were very few marks left on those logs when those people got through doing the hewing. At each end they were notched and mortised together, and they fit exactly. There wasn't one piece a little wider than the other or a little thicker so that one log stuck out maybe a quarter of an inch further. They all were the same. Some of the timbers under that house were hewed eight inches thick and eighteen inches wide. That was for some of the sills and so forth. For the floor joists on the second floor, the ends of those floor joists fit exactly into mortises in that log wall on each side. I doubt, just looking at that, if there was a variation from one end of that long house to the other. I doubt if that upper floor varied a quarter of an inch. I would imagine that the house was at least fifty feet long. I believe that those rooms were eighteen feet long on the inside.

M: How many rooms were there?

H: I believe that there were two rooms on the first floor and two rooms above.

M: Was it a dogtrot house?

H: It was a dogtrot house, and years later the dogtrot had been walled in. The smokehouse--I guess nowadays people would call it a utility room. Back then people used them to hang the meat in, to smoke it and so forth. It was sort of a supply room--had a brick floor, the best that I could tell. I have most of the brick from that house and will use it here to brick this house that we are in right now. They were being destroyed. They were pushed up with a bulldozer, and a lot of them were broken. In digging and around the stables, I don't know how long ago the stables had been done away with, but I found as best as I could determine, the stable for the Martin riding and carriage horses. I also found what I assumed was the carriage house. Those were also floored with brick. There was a back patio on the south side of the Martin home. In bulldozing the remains of that house, the operator went right down that patio with the steel tracks on that bulldozer and ruined most of those bricks. The old dug well at the Martin home was lined with handmade brick. The mayor of West Point has moved the old house and rebuilt it.

M: Was that common around here?

H: Yes, sir. Sometime, if you want to, I'll call Kenny Dill and we'll go see it. He rebuilt the old home, but it is not exactly like it was. I'm pretty sure that he will let us go in and take a look. He doesn't have anything like it originally was, although, it is still a good looking place.

M: How were the bricks made?

H: There at the Martin place, they were made on the north side of a hill, back about a hundred yards northwest of the original homesite.

I can show you part of the old brick kiln. Robert Harrell over here at Building Service Company owns the land. He told me that I could even go in there and put bees on the place. I am quite sure that he wouldn't mind if we went in there to look at those old sites.

M: How big is the old brick kiln?

H: As best as I can tell, there were two or three sites. They must have been about twenty feet in diameter.

M: Were they circular?

H: Yes, that's what it looked like to me. I think that every building that old man had was floored with brick.

M: Was that uncommon?

H: Well, it strikes me as being uncommon. Of course, he kept those stables cleaned out so the horses weren't standing on wet ground. With that brick floor in there, I am quite sure that he kept plenty of straw in there at night and in the wintertime for them for bedding. That struck me as being the finest place for carriage horses and for his riding horses of any place that I had seen around here. The carriage house and the barn for the carriage stock and riding stock, was back a little southwest of the main house.

M: You started to list some of the black families who lived at Waverly.

H: There were so many black families that I can't remember them all. When I first went to Waverly there was an Ellen Mathis and her husband, her son Aaron Mathis and his family, Abraham Turner and his wife Ida. I believe that George Hayes was originally living in Waverly when I went down there, lived right in Waverly. West of Waverly mansion was a black family named Nelson. That house was just torn down. The Hayden family lived on the Burt place, just across the railroad. That house was practically sitting on the riverbank. That was a big two-story log structure with a dogtrot. I have some of the cypress logs from the old smokehouse up here. I am going to make overhead beams for this room if I ever get it finished up. I don't remember if Fanny Johnson and her family were originally in Waverly when I first moved there. This Douglas Ivy, Walter Ivy, and George Ivy lived in the bottom at Waverly. Ben Carson lived in the bottom. Old man George Hainey and Wash Hainey were originally slaves on Colonel Young's place. There were several colored families who had moved down to Waverly and were logging. They didn't farm any land. The black people that I have named worked land, lived at, and considered Waverly as their home.

M: Do you know of a place called March Hill?

H: March Hill, yes. That is southeast of Waverly junction.

M: Is that south of where the railroad comes to Waverly?

H: No. That is way back north of that. It is kind of an outcrop of this prairie, down there in the sandy land. Did I show you these shells that I had picked up around here? These are a type of sea-shells from when the Gulf of Mexico covered this whole area up to Memphis, Tennessee. In an upheaval, out there on March Hill, there are two big masses of these seashells. They looked like you had stirred up a batch of cement, mixed these things in it, and just dumped it out there. It was some sort of an upheaval that happened since the Gulf receded. I don't know how many thousands or millions of years ago, but that upheaval has undoubtedly come after a bunch of this stuff had settled in the mud and hardened to cement-like consistency. The upheaval brought it up. To get to March Hill, you go to Waverly junction, turn left at Waverly junction, go back probably fifty yards to your left, back north up the prairie road, and there is a road to your right that goes down to the gravel pit. There are several families that live back there. You go about a hundred and fifty yards and that is March Hill. Just as you start down to the slope of the hill, start off the crown of the hill, those two or three hunks of rock are out in there somewhere to your right. They are nearly on the line of the original Young estate and the north line of the original Hamilton place. They are there; that is March Hill in there.

M: Were there any families living down that way?

H: That was one of the field roads that went down into what they called the Ivy bottom, the Ivy settlement. Douglas Ivy's daddy started that in there. There used to be, I believe, eight tenant houses down in there when my dad and I were looking after the place.

All we did when we were looking after the place was to keep the families from getting in arguments over who was to work which fields and to see that they paid their rent. At that time they paid a five hundred pound bale of lint cotton for a house and fifteen acres of land. They got fifteen acres of land to work and their pasture rent. Of course, they would have to go out and help keep the pasture fences up and help keep the bushes and the growth from taking over and crowding the pasture out. It was in community pasture. They were allowed an acre for their truck crops such as peanuts, peas, and water-melons. They were also allowed about a half an acre garden spot for that rent.

When my dad and I were managing that place, we kept tenants in all the tenant houses. I've seen a time when the place would pay forty-eight bales of lint cotton a year in rent which was a high price. Then other people came in here. George Banks turned it over to white people to manage and they, over a period of time, ran all the tenants off and tore the houses down. That place has grown up into bushes and timber.

M: You're quite a river man. Do you remember any steamboats coming up the river?

H: I didn't live on the river when I heard the last steamboat coming up. That was in the July high water of 1916. We were living three miles east



of White's station. July of 1916 was very wet, and the river stayed at flood stage all of that month. It was about the middle of the morning; it happened to be a sunshiny morning. We were out in the yard. My father was an old riverman from over on the Yazoo, Sunflower, and Mississippi Rivers and used to own a steam packet of his own. He called us out and said, "I hear a steamboat whistle." So we came out in the yard. He said, "I know I heard a steamboat whistle. You don't never forget a steamboat whistle when you hear one." In a little bit, we heard it again. It was in there about Barton Ferry, and Dad said that it was probably coming on up to Aberdeen. I understand that there was some tug captain from somewhere this side of Mobile who had come upriver to see if it would be feasible to try to open up the Tombigbee River for traffic again.

At Waverly, just above the ferry landing, on this side of the river, there is a steamboat hull laying there that is covered over with mud, now. For years and years, up until I will say until twenty years ago, at real low water some of the upper decking would be above water.

M: Do you know the name of that steamboat?

H: No, I don't. I've heard some of the old-timers tell me, some of the old men who were down there, but I forgot. They were going up the river, if I understand right. He was going up to Barton Ferry to get a couple barges of cotton. About a half a mile above Waverly Ferry, he rounded a curve where high water had washed a tree in. He rammed the bow into the tree and stove in his hull, but he did make it back to Waverly Ferry and managed to tie up. I understand that he got his boiler cooled down enough that it didn't crack when the boat sank. Years later, they stripped the machinery and works out of it and just left the hull there.

M: Do you know what year that was in?

H: No, but I'm pretty sure that it was before 1900. It was way before my time.

M: Do you remember hearing the old folks talk about Keaton ferry?

H: Keaton ferry? The Keatons were up around the Barton community and the Vinton community. When I was a kid up in there, there was a colored family. I believe that the man's name was Larry Keaton. They were kind of light skinned people. That, I believe, would have to be up in there for I have heard the old people. . . . That name is familiar, and those Keatons lived back up there. There were some Keatons around Barton Ferry and Vinton community.

M: Do you remember any buildings in the Vinton community?

H: No, I don't. Frances Rhea's father was Dr. Uithoven. She is a sister to Guise and Eldridge Uithoven. We went to school together out there. She can tell you something about that Vinton and Barton Ferry community, too.

M: Where were they living when you went to school?

H: The old Uithoven home is yet standing out there.

M: Is that the building that we call Cedar Oaks?

H: Yes. I believe that is the only building on the land that they are going to take in on that park.

M: Do you know if that house was built the way that it is today or if the rooms were modified?

H: To the best of my knowledge, that house was built like it is. The last time that I saw it, it was in bad need of repairs.

M: Were there any buildings out behind the house?

H: Yes. There was a smokehouse behind the house. There is one more thing that I want to tell you. Frances Rhea can also tell you something about it. I believe that back about two hundred yards southeast of the Uithoven home, there was another building set out there on a ridge. I believe it had two rooms and that it was originally built as a school for the Barton Ferry community.

M: Was that standing when you were a boy?

H: Well, that was standing when I was a young buck of a man in my mid-twenties. That may have been standing as late as sometime in the early 1940s.

M: How big was the building?

H: It looked like the rooms were about 14' x 18'.

M: Were they in a dogtrot style?

H: No. There was a partition between the two rooms; the partition had been put in after the building was constructed--I was told that at one time, it had been the schoolhouse. It was built for a heater to sit right in the middle of it, and the best I remember, on the east side of it was a double door. If you could get ahold of Frances Rhea, she could probably tell you something about it. One of her uncles and aunts, Henry Perkins and his wife, Frances, lived in it for awhile.

M: Was the building made of plank or log?

H: It was a weatherboard building. I don't remember, but I think that it had drop siding on the outside. It was sealed inside.

In front of the Uithoven house, west of it about two hundred yards I would say, there was another house standing. That was built way before my time. After Frances married, I think that her husband turned the house into a barn.

- M: Do you remember what the building looked like before it was turned into a barn?
- H: It looked like it had probably 14' x 16' rooms. I don't believe that there was a dogtrot between them. It looked like it had about 10' x 16' side rooms hung on the east side of it.
- M: There were two big rooms but not a central hall?
- H: They didn't have a central hall, I don't believe.
- M: Just the two big rooms and smaller rooms off the east side?
- H: Yes, on the east side.
- M: Did it have a fireplace?
- H: It had a fireplace between the two big rooms. One side room had a brick flue in it for the kitchen stovepipe. It's possible that the other room may have been used for a dining room.
- M: Were there any other structures there that you can remember?
- H: No.
- M: What about the smokehouse by Cedar Oaks? Was that behind the house?
- H: Yes, it was behind the house, east of it.
- M: Fifty feet east of it?
- H: Something like that. I don't believe that it was over fifty feet due east of it. It was kind of a smokehouse and storage room.
- M: Were you ever in the Uithoven house?
- H: Yes. I boarded there for awhile with Frances and her husband when they were washing gravel down at the river. Part of the gravel pit was on the Andy Ellis place, and part of it was on the Uithoven place. We washed gravel down there to pave Highway 45 north from West Point, and probably the intersection of Highway 50 back to Okalona. That was in 1938 or 1939.
- M: Can you describe the inside of the house as it looked when you boarded there?
- H: Well, it has been so long. The main part of the house was sitting longways, north and south. It was built sort of in an ell with the kitchen and dining room running back east off of the north bedroom. There was a fireplace with brick chimneys at each end of the house. I believe that the house had a half-story above for bedrooms. It has a half-story above with bedrooms fixed up in the attic, too, if I am not mistaken.

M: Were there parlor stoves in the sitting room?

H: It had an enclosed hallway running east and west. I believe that when I was staying with Frances and Charlie, that Frances cooked in the kitchen which was at the very east end. The house was three rooms long on the north side. Then to the front of them was a hallway, and then came the south rooms. The patio or the front porch came all the way across the front, and the back porch ran east and west from the dining room back to the kitchen. I believe that the smokehouse sat about thirty feet east of the north part of the Uithoven house.

M: Did they have an outhouse behind the house when you lived there?

H: I believe they did. That, I believe sat back out on the edge of the ridge behind the smokehouse. They got water from an artesian well about fifty yards in front of the house, in a little hollow down there. Last time I saw that place, the well was down to a pump. It had played out.

M: Was there ever a set of brick stairs up to the back end of the central hallway?

H: I don't remember, but I don't think so. I'm not sure about that. It has been so long ago. I don't remember seeing brick steps at the back of the house.

M: Were there ever any parlor stoves in the main rooms, or was the only wood stove the cookstove?

H: I believe that the only wood stove in the house was the cookstove, to the best of my recollection.

M: Was there ever a building with a brick foundation out behind the house?

H: I don't remember. It has been so long since I have been back to that old Uithoven house. I don't believe that I have been back there since 1940. Yes, I have been back in there since 1940. I was in there right after World War II. That is when I saw how bad a condition the place was in. The house had been standing vacant. The front stairs had fallen down. The front yard was grown up all along the house at the time. Guise was working for the telephone company or something. I believe that he still lived here at West Point, and he got me to go out there with him for something or other. He got me to carry him out there. He didn't have a car, or what he had was broke down or something and another. We had gone to school together. I went to the house with him. At one time, the Uithovens lived in a two-story log house down at the Barton Ferry landing and operated the Barton ferry.

M: What was that house like?

H: The best that I can remember--I was a little bitty kid when I first

got acquainted with the Uithovens--the rooms looked like they were about 16' x 18' with a dogtrot between them. It was a two-story building to the best of my recollection. It had a sideroom built out of rough lumber on the side. One room, if I remember right, was used for a kitchen. The other room was probably used for the dining room. At that time, Dr. Uithoven had some bees. He got my father to come down there and see about his bees. I was a little bitty tike; I just do remember that.

M: Is that house still standing?

H: No, I believe that it burned in the mid-1920s. I believe that black people were living in it at the time it burned, if I'm not mistaken.

M: Were there any other black people living in houses along the bluff there?

H: I just don't remember. The black people lived back west of Vinton and Barton Ferry.

M: Did they have their own town back there?

H: Well, there were a few of them on the land, but most of them were tenants on the Andy and Zack Ellis place. There were one or two families that lived on the old Watson place.

M: Do you remember their names?

H: It has been so long ago. I remember Tony Trotter.

M: Was there ever a woman named Parthenia Trotter?

H: I don't know. There could possibly have been. There were some Trotters in there. I used to remember all of those people's names, black and white, in that country. But golly whiz, when you're not thinking about anything and after years and years. . . .

M: Can you describe the old Trotter house?

H: I'm trying to think of where the Trotters lived when I knew them.

M: The white Trotters or the black Trotters?

H: They're black ones. I believe that the white ones eventually moved to Lowndes County and on to Columbus. The Gladneys lived up there on the old Dick Whatley place, west of Vinton School.

M: What road was that on?

H: That was on the road from Vinton, up through Whites Station, and into West Point. It came by Payne Field. The Cox family lived up there, north of the old Dick Whatley place, back in behind the Mealer place this side of Vinton. They were black. There used to be a bunch of blacks that lived on land that Weyerhaeuser owns. I just remember when the houses were torn down. Some of them were made out of logs, and some of them were made out of plank, just boxed up.

M: Was this on the old Vinton road?

H: Well, it was off, but they had to use the old Vinton road to come out and go to town.

M: Were the houses down toward the river?

H: No, sir. That was back about a mile northwest of the old Vinton schoolhouse. By the way, where the old Vinton schoolhouse site is, and where people by the name of Vinton owned land are two different places.

M: So, there were people named Vinton?

H: Yes, sir.

M: Was that when you were a boy?

H: Well, that was before my time. If I am not mistaken, little Ed Wilson owned part of what is the old Vinton place.

M: Now, an older man named Ed Wilson lived on the corner of the Barton Ferry and Vinton roads.

H: Well, his land went back. Now that Vinton is back in there somewhere or another.

M: Did you have a church at Vinton?

H: The only church service that I ever attended at Vinton was at the Vinton schoolhouse. If the people in that community went to church other than at Vinton schoolhouse, they went up to Monroe County to the Bethel Church or to the church just above the Darracott community, to Lebanon Church. I believe that Lebanon was probably Presbyterian. No, it is Baptist, too.

M: But you never went there?

H: Yes. I've been to those when I was living up there in Vinton community. They used to have church services at the Vinton schoolhouse.

I'm going to tell you an incident that happened to my two oldest brothers on Sunday morning. Mother made them take a bath, put on their Sunday clothes, and sent them to Sunday school and church at Vinton. We were living east of Whites Station, so my brothers decided to take a shortcut through the woods which would have probably saved them a quarter of a mile. They weren't in any notion to go to church, I don't think. So going down Town Creek, they found a big old bull coon in a steel trap. Dad was trapping, but he was somewhere else on the trapline. They decided that they were going to take that coon out of the trap alive, bring it back to the house, and show the rest of us what Dad had caught in the trap. Well, they got to figuring and got to figuring. They came up with an idea. One of them had a fishing line, hook and float in his pocket. My oldest

brother said, "I'll tell you. We'll cut us a long pole, and we'll tie the one end of that string to the pole. You take off your coat, throw it over the coon and wrap it around it, hold it. I'll tie the other end of the string around his leg and take him out of the trap."

My oldest brother was kind of sharp. If anybody's coat got tore up, he didn't want it to be his. And if anybody got bit, he didn't want to be the one to get bit. Well, things work just good, just like they planned. They got the coon tied to the stick. Of course, those kids would have pocket knives and it was probably dull. They weren't able to cut down a very big sapling; it probably wasn't but five or six feet long. My oldest brother was going to lead the coon home, so my other brother picked up a little club and was driving the coon.

They started back home. My oldest brother had the stick, leading the coon. He was looking back to see how the coon was coming along, and he hung one of his feet under a root, stumbled and fell down. About the time he fell down, my other brother punched the coon with his club. The doggone coon jumped, straddled my oldest brother's back and went to scratching and chewing. My other brother knocked it off, and they led the coon on to the house, showing it off.

Well, Momma wanted to know how my oldest brother got his shirt all torn and bloody. Charles told her that he was looking back while he was leading the coon, he fell down, and the coon jumped and straddled his back. He still didn't know that my other brother had punched the coon with his club at the time he fell down. Momma made him take his shirt off. His back was cut up pretty bad. She got it washed up and got to looking at it. There were some bruises on there that she decided the coon couldn't have made. She got to looking and decided that my brother hit my oldest brother's back more than he'd hit the coon.

The sad part of it was that after they got the coon on a collar and chain, Momma doctored my brother's back with some iodine and turpentine. He put on a clean shirt. It was too late for Sunday school or preaching, either one. She had dinner cooked. She went and got the old leather strap which was about three feet long, and she tore them both up. When she got through, my oldest brother asked her, "Momma, what did you whoop us for?" She said, "You didn't mind me." He said, "How come we didn't mind you?" She says, "Because I told you all to go to Sunday school and to church. Y'all found a coon in the trap and here you come dragging that thing back and let Sunday school and church go." My oldest brother told her, "Momma, you know, I don't think it's fair to whoop me as hard a time as I had with that coon and my brother beating on my back."

M: Where was your house at when you lived up there?

H: We were living approximately three miles east of Whites Station, down at what they call Knox Hill. We were down at the foot of Knox Hill. That's on that road that comes out from West Point, you take what is now Eshman Avenue, go north approximately five miles to old Payne

Field and then turn east on the Vinton and Barton Ferry Road. Whites Station is on the I C<sup>1</sup> Railroad, and the Vinton/Barton Ferry Road is about a quarter of a mile north of the original Whites community which is practically all black, now. It was about three miles from the railroad to where we lived.

M: Did you shop at West Point?

H: Yes, sir. I believe that we were eight or nine miles from West Point. We would haul whatever we had to sell to West Point to sell. If we had honey to ship, we had to haul it to West Point. At one time, believe it or not, West Point used to have fourteen passenger trains a day, in and out. For years and years, they haven't even had one. They only have four buses a day coming into West Point and mail delivery twice a day.

M: When you were a boy, your mother doctored you with turpentine and iodine. Did she have any other medicines?

H: That is about all we had to doctor with back then. If you got pneumonia back then, it was practically a death warrant if they couldn't take a mustard plaster and blister it out. You were just about a goner. Very few people survived even pneumonia back then. They didn't have the medicine, even the doctors.

M: Did the doctors come around to your house?

H: The doctors made house calls on horseback then. They charged fifty cents a mile, one way.

M: So that was pretty expensive.

H: Well, I don't know. I think they charged probably a dollar for office calls. The doctors pretty much carried their own drugs with them when they made house calls out in the country. It wasn't anything unusual up until probably the mid-1950s for doctors to make house calls out to Waverly, probably out to the western edge of Clay County.

M: Where did your doctor come from?

H: Well, we generally used doctors from here in West Point. Some people around Waverly used to use doctors from Columbus. I have known a couple of the doctors who lived in Columbus. They would ride the southern passenger train--it is C & G<sup>2</sup> now--from Columbus on the morning train, or maybe the noonday train, to walk around through the community to see about two or three patients. Then they would catch the next eastbound train back to Columbus.

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<sup>1</sup>Illinois Central.

<sup>2</sup>Columbus and Greenville.



M: Did Dr. George Darracott ever doctor you?

H: Yes, he gave me my first typhoid shot.

M: Did you go to his office in Darracott?

H: Yes, I went to his office in Darracott. I'll tell you an incident that happened in 1927. I don't know if any of his old medical records are around or how much doctors kept records back then. Some blacks up here at Whites Station got in a shooting one night at Mount Zion Church. One of them had a switchblade knife, and the other one had a old owl-head pistol. About the time the one with the switchblade knife cut the other one across his hand, the pistol went off. The bullet struck him right in the center of the forehead. I was living at Strongs Station, just before I left the area.

They came up to Strongs Station. I remember that clearly. I had my left arm broke, but some Negro came up there and got old man Jim Bradley woke up to come down there with his T-model pickup to get this fellow with the cut hand and carry him to Dr. Darracott to get his hand sewed back. Why we picked the one up that was shot, I don't know. We were living in Monroe County, and the shooting took place in Clay County. But, anyway, we threw him in back of the pickup and took off up to Dr. Darracott's. We had pretty well got the bleeding stopped, put a tourniquet on the man's arm. We got the doctor up. His office was in the back of his store. So Dr. Darracott got his kerosene lamps lit and was looking at the man's hand. He decided that he could sew it back together, and he also decided that he would try something on a couple of cut leaders while he was about it. He told the boy, "I'm going to have to splice those leaders and tie them back together." And the doctor did. Anyway, at about two-thirty the next morning, he was through with it. He said something about the fellow laying in the back of the truck. So old man Bradley said, "Oh, they were all scared down there and was going to run off and leave him laying there, so I had them throw him in the truck. He is bound to be dead. He is shot between the eyes." Dr. Darracott said, "I'll go take a look at him. He's stiff by now, but I'll go take a look at him." He took a look at that fellow. He was breathing and he kind of moaned. Doc said, "Let's get him out of here and get him into the office. That fellow ought to be dead by now, the way that hole is. Let's go look at him. Maybe I can probe that bullet out and stop some of that headache. He ain't going to have such a headache when he dies."

We got him in there on the table, and doctor went to probing. He said, "That bullet didn't go nowhere. That bullet hit that man's thick skull and glanced off. Here is that bullet up in the top of his head." He must have had his head rared back when the bullet hit. It went in under the hide and went up on top of his head. That old arrowhead bullet stopped. About the time the doctor got through getting the bullet out, got through disinfecting, that fellow sat up. The first thing he said is, "I've sure got a hell of a headache." We didn't worry about him anymore.

M: Were there any other doctors up there?

H: Not up in that community.

M: Weren't there any in Vinton either?

H: Dr. Uithoven was the only doctor. Dr. Uithoven was really an accredited doctor. He studied in Amsterdam, Holland, and in Berlin, Germany, he told me. Dr. Uithoven was good with the flu and such as that. Yes, sir. He was good. Doc was too easygoing. He died penniless. When he died, he was an old man. He was good-hearted. He tried to help people up there, and up in that same region today what Doctor told them when I was a young kid has come true. Those people up there bought land and had it mortgaged. Doc had a little money, and he took second mortgages on lots of that land, trying to help them hold together. He'd tell them, "Well, if we can all hold on, there is oil here and someday they'll strike th' oil and we'll all be out of trouble."

Doc tried to help his neighbors. I had a bad cough one time, left over from the flu, and Doc heard me coughing one day. I was a seventeen year old buck. That was about maybe, eight or nine years after that flu epidemic in 1918. Doc told me--he didn't speak English too well--he said, "Begolly and boy you've been had the flu." He said, "I'll be bringing you something after dinner dat will cure dat cough. You'll get in trouble if I don't stop it." Doctor brought me a couple of dozen tablets that looked like aspirin tablets, but they were harder. He told me to take two in my mouth every three hours and let them dissolve. Well, a lot of times I had been having to get up at night and sit up. I'd just hit spells where I couldn't lay down for coughing so much. Well, on the second night I got the first good night's rest that I had had in years, a solid night. I didn't cough. In three days time, that cough had stopped. I was working to get money to go to what is now Wood Junior College. I tried to pay Doc. I would have been glad at the time to have given him five dollars. That would have been a lot of money but I was willing. "Now boy, you be working hard." He said, "Doc is selling a little bit of gravel. Doc is getting a little bit of money now. No, you was hurting." That's the kind of a man that Doc was. It is a rare thing to see one like him now who would think that much of his fellow man. Most of them now say, "I'll get out here and get what I can for myself, and the other fellow is a sucker if he don't get what he can for himself." That seems to be the way that the world has gone.

M: When did Dr. Uithoven come to this country?

H: He first came over here as a mercenary in the Civil War, I believe. He was on the Union side. I heard him telling about being in the Union army during the Civil War. I've heard him say that if there was some man who was too lazy to clean his own rifle, he would take it and clean it for a nickel. I've heard him tell about shining officers' boots for a nickel. He said, "I was saving my money to go back to Berlin and study my medicine." I'm quite sure from what he

said, that he was in the Union army. What I don't understand is that I don't think Doc ever got any kind of pension. The old fellow may not have even thought about asking for a pension in his old age. Doc felt like America had been mighty good to him. I'm sort of the same way. Great goodness! I feel like if you're born in America that's enough. You can make it if you don't have a bad mental handicap.

M: Did he ever become a citizen?

H: Oh, yes. Doc was a voting citizen of this country.

M: Do you remember his death?

H: Yes. I believe that Doc died right about, or just before, the mid-1930s. His second wife, Guise, Eldridge, and Frances' mother, died about a year and a half or two years after Doc died.

M: Was he a well respected member of the community?

H: Yes, I'll tell you what. I don't think Doc did any worse than a bunch more of them in there. Doc made a little whiskey, made some home brew to sell, but I kind of look at it this way. When things are rough, that Depression like it was and when a man had a wife and a family to look after, I don't feel like it was any bigger disgrace for a man to make a little whiskey and sell it to take care of his family than it was for another man to buy it and drink it. That's just the way I feel about it. I'll tell you what, I probably have more respect for Doc than I have in those hypocrites that would buy his whiskey and his home brew, drink it, and then want to run him down for making it.

M: I was just curious because, many times a first generation immigrant is not accepted in his community.

H: Doc was accepted and he was good. He was good to black and white.

M: Were there blacks living around his place?

H: No. Preacher Willie Shirley who lives on that corner of the Vinton and Barton Ferry Road was the closest black living in there around the Barton Ferry community and the Vinton community at that time. Then, back west from that road, the Ellises had black tenants on their place. West of Vinton schoolhouse, there were a few blacks on a few spots of land in there, their homes and so forth.

M: Do you remember the Mathis Hill community?

H: That's out here on Highway 50. You hit Highway 50 and go east from my house. You go past Prairie View Community Club out here which is a metal building sitting on the right side of the road. It is about two miles down, and it is on the north side of the road.

M: How far?

H: It borders on Highway 50. The quarters and all are about a quarter of a mile from the road. Homer Tumlinson owns that now.

M: Who was the place named after?

H: That was Mathis, a fellow Mathis that settled in there and had slaves. There are a lot of blacks that are named Mathis out there at Waverly and in Mathis Gin community.

M: Where is Mathis Gin community?

H: Mathis Gin community is about two miles due east of us. You can either go down Highway 50 to Prairie View Community Club and cut back, or you can go around this road, hit the pavement, come to the crossroads down here at Davis crossroads, turn back to your left, and go back up in there.

M: One thing that we didn't talk about that we mentioned was the school at Vinton. Can you describe what it was like inside?

H: It was a large one-room structure. That had drop siding on the outside, a weatherboard outfit. It was up on two-foot brick pillars. It was sealed with beaded tongue-and-groove sealing on the inside. When I first went there it had a wood-shingled roof on it. It had a raised rostrum for the kids to come up and stand up on when they were having classes. The house sat lengthways, east and west, with double front doors on the east end and broad steps. It had about a thirty-inch back door at the west end, and a big stove that sat in the middle of the floor, a big, square, box type cast iron heater. I know that we used to go out there in the woods and gather up a bunch of pine knots in cold weather and put them in there to get it going good. Then we listened to it puff like a locomotive.

M: How big was the room?

H: The room was about eighteen feet wide, and I would say approximately twenty-eight feet long. It had a blackboard and an organ in it for music for the religious services.

M: How many desks did it have?

H: I don't remember offhand. I believe there were six rows on each side and eight desks, what we called "bought desks," to the row. Then there were four rows of what we would call "deacons benches" in the back. There was a long bench up at the front for the kids to sit on when the teacher was hearing the lesson. One teacher taught from the primer through the eighth grade.

M: Did the teacher call the students up to the front for each grade?

H: Yes. She generally kept a bundle of hickory limbs. Out there on the river, they have these long-jointed reed canes. Mrs. Sarah Miller was teaching school there one year. It was in April, and we would

get us a joint of that reed cane, cut it to where it would be hollow all the way through, and then make a ramrod to shove up in there. We'd go to the plum bushes and get us a bunch of green plums that would just fit in there good. We preferred them to be old enough to have seeds established in them. They worked better it seemed like. One day I had a popgun made up. There was one old boy who would, everytime I'd go down the steps, catch my breeches tight and bust me in the seat with a green plum before I could get loaded up. I was going to surprise him one day just before recess time. I got my popgun loaded, had my green plum in there, and I shoved my ramrod up, getting things ready to where all I'd have to do is give it a little light shove and she would pop. Well, I was holding it and easing the plum up there. I didn't watch the way that I had it pointed. By dog, I shoved it a little too much. That thing popped out. The plum hit Miss Sarah Miller right square on the end of her nose. That wrecked my recess. That ruined my recess.

- M: Do you remember hearing of a school at Vinton that stood before the one that you went to?
- H: I understand that there was a school around where the old Vinton post office was. It either had to be that building that I was telling you about east of the old Uithoven house, or one that the Andrews told me about. Old man Andrews, old Mrs. Andrews, and their son Bradley Andrews who raised me, told me something about a school that was down towards where the old Vinton post office was. It was somewhere close to the Watson place. They told me something about it but I forgot. There was also something about the house back east of the old Uithoven house that I told you was a school. The way that building was built you could tell that the center partition was put in years later.
- M: That was the Barton building?
- H: That was there at the old--I forgot what they called it, Cedar Lane or Cedar Grove.
- M: Cedar Oaks.
- H: If I understand right, the Vinton schoolbuilding that was there by the Vinton post office got blown away by a storm at one time or another. It may be possible. I don't know if that was blown away before the school I went to was built, but there is something about a storm, maybe around 1907 or 1908 or something.

Up on Town Creek, just east of where Homer Tumlinson lives on the Barton Ferry Road, the county had just built a new wrought iron bridge. A little while after the bridge was finished, a tornado came through and ripped it out of the creek. I saw some of the old twisted beams and railings. There was something about Vinton School being destroyed in a tornado. If you could have interviewed Bessie Andrews, she could have told you, for they were living on the old McGraw place, just a half a mile back west of Vinton schoolhouse, at the time that happened.

M: Well, this has been a pretty full day. We're about out of tape.

H: Do you have anything left on the tape?

M: A little.

H: Now listen, you know last Sunday I told you that there used to be a legal distillery in the Vinton community. That was operated by old man Joe Harris and his daddy. They lived back in on Cane Creek behind the Tobe Wilson place. At one time, Congress passed a law. . . .

M: This is an interview with Mr. James "Honeybee" Hendrix for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. His address is Route 2, Box 416, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The interview is taking place in Mr. Hendrix's home on February 9, 1980.

Mr. Hendrix, can you tell me a little bit about your father's life and how he came here.

H: My father was born at what is called the North Bend community, east of Philadelphia. There is a bend in the Pearl River, and up until thirty years ago the community was called North Bend community. When my father was less than a year old, the Civil War broke out. My grandfather, Wesley Hendrix, carried my father back to Carthage, Mississippi to live with my great-grandfather, William Hendrix, and some of my dad's old maid aunts. I have heard my dad say that before the end of the Civil War he heard the big guns at the siege of Vicksburg. After the Civil War, when my grandfather was released from federal prison--I forget, offhand, the name of the prison, but it was up off of the shore of Illinois--he moved back to the North Bend community and lived there, farmed, and was justice of the peace. He taught school up until his death.

My father, on completing his schooling there, around Philadelphia, went and lived with a doctor close to Carthage so that he could have a chance to further his studies at a college that was just west of Carthage, on the road that goes to Canton, Mississippi. For years my father taught school, and he had always been interested in my great-grandfather's beekeeping. Eventually, he had taken over my great-grandfather's bees. I believe that was part of my grandfather's estate upon my great-grandfather's death.

In 1909, my father moved out from the Delta over to the McCloud place, south of Columbus. In the latter part of 1909, he moved here to West Point, and he settled out here at Prairie View where I was born. In 1911, the year after I was born, we moved about two miles north, to a place three miles east of Whites Station. The main plantation was the Knox plantation, and there was a big hill there that was called Knox Hill. We lived at the foot of Knox Hill. We were then three miles west of the Vinton community. I believe that some of the people up in that region claim that they live in Vinton community.

We were living about midway between Whites Station and Vinton. The reason for the move into that area was because it was a little closer to the Vinton School for my oldest brothers and sisters. They had to make about a twelve mile a day round trip from Prairie View to the Vinton School; they had to ride horseback. In 1918, my mother died in the flu epidemic. I lived around with the Andrews family in the Vinton community, and went to school for a couple of

more years, probably until I was ten years old. At the time, there were several families that sent their children to school at the Vinton community. One family north of Vinton School was the Ab Duke family. There was Lee Alton, Velma, Annie Laurie Duke, and there may have been a Lilly Maude that went there. I am not quite sure. They lived on the east side of the Vinton and Darracott and Aberdeen Road. On the west side of the road, at the Monroe and Clay County line, is the Gibson place. It is possible that Jim Ed McGraw and his family could have been living there. At the time, the oldest boy, Jim Ed, Jr., and the oldest daughter, Annie Hicks, were going to Vinton School. Back south about a half mile from the Gibson place, was the Brooks family. I don't believe that they had any children at school, at that time. I believe that all their children were grown. Due east, on the east side of the road from the Brooks place, was the Tote Wilson place.

M: Is that Tote or Tobe?

H: We called him Tote but I think that it was really Tobe. There was one boy and two girls from that family who went to school there. The Uithovens were coming up to school from down next to Barton Ferry, Guise, Eldridge, and Frances Uithoven. There were the Harrises that were coming from toward Barton Ferry, Bobby Harris and his three sisters. They were, I believe, living on the old Atkins place. There was a Bradford, one boy of the Bradfords living there. Also, the Wright family lived on the Schrock place. The boys' names were Arthur, Wilbur, Joe, and Sid. Mary was the girl's name. They were going to school there. I was going to school there. At one time, the McNeils lived back down towards where Hanging Kettle and Town Creek join, approximately two miles back west of the Vinton community. There were two girls, and I believe that the boy, Merl, was just old enough to get started to school. Merl may not have started to school, but the two girls rode a big, blaze-faced, bay horse to school. I remember that quite well.

M: What other things do you remember about living near the Vinton community? What was it like when you were growing up?

H: Well, in our time, they used the Vinton schoolhouse to hold the church service in. One Sunday, about a year before my mother died, she had made my brothers take a bath, put on their clothes, and sent them to Vinton for Sunday school and church. They had taken a shortcut through the woods, which might have saved a couple hundred yards, instead of going down the road. Down on Town Creek, they found a big, old coon in one of Dad's traps. Dad was running the other end of the trapline, so my brothers decided that they would see about bringing the coon home alive. Well, country boys back then generally had a piece of fishing twine with a fishhook on it in their pockets. They decided that they would take their pocket knife, cut down a sapling, and tie the coon. They wanted to tie the string to one of the coon's legs, tie the string to the pole, take the coon out of the trap, and lead it home. My oldest brother told my brother Arthur, "You take your coat off and put it around the



coon, and I'll tie the string on his leg." If anybody's coat got torn up, my oldest brother didn't want it to be his, and if somebody got hurt, he didn't want to be the one that got hurt. Things worked just fine. They got the coon tied up to the pole. My brother Arthur picked up a club to drive it while my oldest brother led it. He was leading it, and he looked back to see how the coon was coming along. He hung a foot under a root and fell down. The coon jumped straddle of his back and went to chewing on him. My other brother was trying to knock the coon off with the club. He finally got the coon off. They brought it on to the house.

Well, they were showing us what they had. So, Mama looked at my brother's back. She got a pan of water and a washrag, got a bottle of iodine and went to washing his back up, doctoring it up. She got through with everything, got him doctored up. They were getting ready to sit down to dinner, and she came in with the leather strap. She gave both of my brothers a whipping. My brother wanted to know what was wrong and how come she whipped them. She said, "Y'all didn't mind me. I sent you all to Sunday school and church. You didn't go. You came leading a coon back." When my brother fell down and that coon jumped on his back, my brother tried to knock the coon off with the club. Mama had got to examining my brother's back. She decided that my other brother had probably hit my oldest brother with the club as much as he did the coon. My oldest brother carried the scars of that coon biting and scratching on his back as long as he lived.

M: What were your brothers' names?

H: My oldest brother's name was Charles Albert. The youngest brother's name was Arthur Bell. My oldest sister's name was Ruby Luiza. My sister just under Ruby, was named Annie Laurie, and the youngest sister was named Elsie May.

M: What was your mother's name?

H: My mother's name was Nora Luiza. She was raised down in Sunflower County, around Yazoo City, Phoenix, and Satartia, down in there. They were farmers.

M: What was your dad's name?

H: My dad's name was Oscar Pope Hendrix. I have heard my mother and father tell that before the boll weevil came to this country, they would go out and clear up around down in the Delta, cut the timber trees, clear it up for farming. In the spring, when the flood waters from the Mississippi River receded, the women and the men would get out there and pull off their shoes, stockings, socks, and would plant the crops. The men would go ahead in the mud, pulling up the old cotton stalks, or cornstalks, whichever they were planting. The women had big aprons. They would get about a half bushel of cottonseed or probably a gallon of corn seed in that apron. Wherever a stalk of cotton or cornstalk was pulled up, if it was

cotton they would throw down probably a half cup of seed in that hole, and stomp it in the mud with their feet. If it was corn, they would drop three grains of corn in there. That's the way they said they planted down there every spring, after the backwater. They followed the backwater.

I have heard my mother and dad tell about cotton stalks that were eight feet tall. They would climb up on the bottom limbs of those cotton stalks to pick the cotton out of the top. The boll weevil was not here in this country at the time, and the cotton on that rich soil would bear.

M: When did the boll weevil come?

H: The boll weevil got to this area in 1913.

M: It came to northeast Mississippi then?

H: No. The boll weevil originally worked up from Mexico, from the west, through Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. In just a few years time, it covered all of the Cotton Belt.

M: When did it get here?

H: 1913. It had pretty well taken the whole state in 1913, I understand.

M: Were you living at Vinton at the time?

H: Yeah. We were living at what some of them called the Vinton community.

M: At the Knox plantation?

H: Uh-hum. At the foot of Knox Hill.

M: What happened when the boll weevil hit here?

H: The bud that makes the bloom is called a square, on your cotton stalk. They would puncture that bud. The boll weevil has a sucking apparatus. That is the way they feed. They are not a chewer; they are a sucker. They have a little bill about an eighth of an inch long. They can puncture that square to suck it. After they get through sucking it, they lay an egg in it. That kills the boll, that square that would make the bloom, and it falls off. On a young boll they will puncture one or two, sometimes all four squares. The blooms that do survive, after it makes a boll, that grows the cotton lint. Sometimes they puncture that young boll and suck some of the juice out of it and lay an egg. It will survive and that egg hatches and makes a little white grub, a larva, that eats the young lint out of there before it grows. Sometimes there will be one or maybe two sides of that boll eaten out. It will be very deformed, and you will have maybe two good locks of cotton on

the other side. You will have a lot of that boll weevil-bit cotton that will be damaged. It will be yellow.

Your best grade cotton is cotton that hasn't even had a rain on it. It will be a good, pure, fluffy white lint on a good long staple. Now a staple, when you are talking about cotton, means the length that those fibers will pull out to. They are measured in eighths. A good cotton grader will take that lint and go to pulling a little piece of it. It will go anywhere from maybe as much as five-sixteenths, and maybe it will go an inch and a sixteenth or an inch and an eighth. I believe that the longest staple is about an inch and a quarter. That's good cotton. You've got "fair," "fair to middling," and "middling" on your cotton. Your very best grade is "good," I believe.

M: Were people in the Vinton community growing cotton when the weevil hit?

H: Yes, sir. Ever since the colonies were established here in the South, before the Revolutionary War, cotton was the main cash crop here. It held sway until a few years ago, when the boll weevil and mechanical farming made the cost of raising it so high that it wasn't profitable in this area. The people raised cotton and corn around Vinton community. They raised sorghum for molasses, and back when I was growing up, most of the farmers that went to town from out in there would generally figure on carrying some sort of produce to sell, to buy the staples that they needed, such as flour, coffee, sugar. Everybody pretty well raised their own corn, and there were gristmills through this country that ground corn into meal. You hardly ever see that now.

M: Did anybody grow wheat?

H: No, there wasn't any wheat raised in this country, although they would grow some oats for feed, for hay.

M: Did the gristmills grind that too?

H: No. The gristmills would only grind corn around here. In my father's day, my great-grandfather at Carthage had a gin. . . .

We haven't mentioned the Trannie Wilson family that lived up at Vinton. Let's see, there was Tobe, Trannie, and Dennis Wilson. Have you interviewed Frank Wilson yet?

M: We hope to.

H: I believe that he has two cousins around here somewhere. James, I believe, is around. Have you interviewed Buddy Wilson yet?

M: No.

H: That is Tobe's boy. They can probably tell you things that I don't know about up there. I believe that they were in that area longer

than I was. I know that Buddy Wilson was. Buddy has one or two sisters living here at West Point. I don't remember who they married.

I'm trying to think of some more people. Let's see. There were the Whatleys; they are all dead and gone. There are some black people up in there. The Gatlins, old man Frank Gatlin is dead. I don't know what his boy could tell you about that community. I think that he came there about the time that I left. I don't remember his first name. I don't believe that there are any of the black Trotters left up there anymore.

M: Are there any Moores?

H: Black people?

M: Either black or white.

H: There was Tony Moore's bunch, blacks who lived just west of Hanging Kettle Creek. They are all out and gone from here. There were some Schrocks who lived, at one time, just east of Town Creek bridge on the Barton Ferry Road, about a half a mile or probably a quarter of a mile from the creek. The parents lived about one mile west of Vinton schoolhouse. The old house has been torn down. That's up at the old Jack Horner place. Homer Tumlinson now owns it. Have you interviewed Mrs. Andy Ellis?

M: Not yet. Did you ever know Jesse Dukeminier?

H: Yes. They were at Strongs Station. There are some of the Dukeminiers buried down there in the Vinton Cemetery, some of the Dukeminiers and the Walkers. I don't think that they ever lived in Clay County. I think that they lived up in southern Monroe County, somewhere in the Darracott neighborhood.

M: The Dukeminier buried in the Vinton Cemetery is Dr. Dukeminier.

H: Yes.

M: Did you ever hear any stories about Dr. Dukeminier?

H: No, but when I was living at Strongs Station, I went to school with his three grandsons.

M: What were their names?

H: The oldest one's name was Algernon, the next was Walker, then George, and the youngest was Emmett. There were four boys in Sid's family. Emmett Dukeminier that lived at Strongs Station--I believe that he married a Terrell--didn't have any children. There was one Dukeminier, Jim--no, there were two of them, Jim and Jesse--who moved to West Point and lived there. I went to school with their children a little bit when I was going to West Point. I believe that the old Walker place is up in Monroe County, probably out there towards the

Darracott community. Now wait a minute. Have you got a Walker listed in there somewhere with that bunch?

M: A Dr. Walker.

H: Okay. That's where Tom Dukeminier got his Walker, Tom Walker Dukeminier. Miss Lelia was a Walker, you see. Those two places were out east of Strongs Station in Monroe County.

M: Did you ever know Dr. Walker?

H: No, I never did. That was before my time. I know that the last of the older Dukeminiers died, when old man Sid died up there. Sid and Emmett had a general store in Strongs Station. Sid Dukeminier was the last one to die, I believe. In settling up, I do not know the exact facts about it, but I understood that Sid and Emmett Dukeminier borrowed five hundred dollars from Dr. Walker to start the store with, start their business and so forth. When Sid died, that money hadn't been paid back. So, they had to figure the interest on the money over that long period of years, figure out Miss Lelia's part and Mrs. Emmett Dukeminier's part, and then settle the rest up with the other Walker heirs.

M: Is that store still standing?

H: The last store, yes. The old original store is not standing. The original store was built on the west side of the railroad, up at Strongs Station. The road from West Point to Aberdeen came through the Strongs Station community and went about three hundred yards east before turning north to go to Aberdeen. Now it turns north on the west side of the IC railroad tracks and goes across what was the front porch of the original store. The second store is a brick building, and it has been abandoned for years.

M: Was there a store in the Vinton community?

H: Yes. Well, an old man by the name of Poss lived in what was the old Vinton post office and store. I believe that old man operated the store, probably, some during the mid-teens. I know where the old store and post office building used to be there at Vinton.

M: Do you remember what it looked like?

H: Yes, sir. It was a frame building, a long frame building, with a porch and double door on the west end facing the road. It had a partition; one room was partitioned off in the back. It looked like it was built that way for living quarters. At the back room, it had a side door facing south. The best I remember, it had a brick flue in the center of the building for a heater, a stove.

M: Did it have chimneys?

H: I don't remember any chimneys.

M: Did it have windows?

H: On the back, yes, it had windows. It had two front windows facing the road, too.

M: So, there was a window on each side of the double doors. Then there was another window on the back?

H: The back room, I believe, had a window on the north side and a window on the east side.

M: Was it two storys or a story and a half?

H: It was just a single story.

M: Do you know where they dumped their garbage by the store?

H: No, I don't.

M: What kind of garbage would they have had?

H: It would have been very little; it would have probably been mostly broke-up glass jars. Back then, people didn't buy too much tin goods from town. We pretty much had to raise everything that we ate. There would have probably been some household trinkets like old broken lamps or lampshades, or maybe some of those old metal shades that they would have gotten tired of and threw out.

M: I suppose that this is going to be a stupid question, but what kind of dishes did they use?

H: They were probably a cheap grade of china back then.

M: Would it be the kind with pictures on them?

H: You would find some people with willowware, and you would find china with different designs, pictures on them, flowers and so forth. I'm trying to think. There was some house up in that community. . . . They had, I guess now, that it was probably willowware. It wasn't real white china and it had a blue design on it. One of the pitchers, on each side of it, had the picture of a Dutch windmill. I'm trying to think whose. . . . Now, that wasn't the Uithoven house, I know. I'm trying to think where I saw that. I was a kid. Of course, even after I had left that community, I was back in visiting people a lot.

M: Were there any traces of old buildings there when you were growing up?

H: I don't know. I never did ramble around through the woods too much up in there. Back east of where the Tote Wilson place is, I understand, is the old Harris place. That is down there on Cane Creek. No, that may be Mill Creek in there, but there are a lot of canes

growing in there. I have had Uncle Joe Harris--he is no kin to me, but we all called him Uncle Joe--tell me that they had a legalized still back there.

I have seen part of the old shed that they had the still in. One time the government allowed the farmers to get a permit to make so many gallons of whiskey a year. They would make the whiskey. The government furnished the wooden barrels for them to put it in. When they made a barrel of whiskey, the government man came and checked it for proof. It had to be a certain percent alcohol. When he accepted it, he drove the bung into the barrel. They had what they called sealing wax. It's made out of pitch mostly. You took a match and heated it. It will melt. They would melt a lot of that so it would run down on this bung. Then he had a special government seal that he would stamp in that while it was still hot. If that was broken before it got to the government warehouse, the government wouldp't pay for it. They would know that it had been tampered with.

M: Was Uncle Joe Harris also known as Fisherman Joe?

H: Yes. He fished up and down the river. Times got hard and he even made corn squeezings when it wasn't too legal. He had a family to feed. You can't hold a fellow responsible when he can't get anything to do for feeding his family. I never have got hemmed up that tight myself. I feel this way about it. If it wasn't for the person drinking it, there wouldn't be any need for a person to make it.

M: What was Joe Harris like?

H: Old man Harris was about five foot nine inches tall. He weighed about a hundred and seventy pounds. He was a good natured old man until you stirred him up. It would take a lot to stir him up, but I've seen him stirred up. He would hurt you when he got stirred up. He was a hard-working old fellow, but right after World War I things had gotten tight. The land wore out. He got in a little trouble for making whiskey, and he came back. He fished a lot on that river, and also, he used to trap a lot. He was the first man, that I know of, at Barton Ferry or Waverly who owned a motorboat. Uncle Joe was a pretty good carpenter. He was a good blacksmith.

M: Did he have a small shop on his place at Cane Creek?

H: I don't know. They used to have, I imagine, just enough of a shop to keep their own tools and stuff repaired. Uncle Joe never did talk too much about back in there. He did tell me he and his brother were cutting a tree one day and it fell on his brother and broke his back. He had to get help to get the tree off and help get his

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Hendrix later stated that supervised whiskey making was probably legalized by an act of Congress in 1794.

brother to the house. His brother was paralyzed from his waist down.

M: Did they have a regular farm down there?

H: Yes, they had a regular farm down there.

M: With a house and a barn?

H: Yes, sir.

M: Did they have several outbuildings?

H: I don't know how many outbuildings, but I know that they had a house and, what they generally called a crib. They put side sheds and stalls around on the side of it to house the animals.

M: How long were the Harrises in that area?

H: I don't know. I think that Uncle Joe was born up in there Vinton; I'm not too sure. He might have been born in Houston, Mississippi, but I think he was born and raised up in there. I don't know whether they sold the place, or whether they lost it for taxes. There are gaps in there that Uncle Joe never did tell me too much about.

M: What kind of relationship did you have with him? Did you work with him?

H: He lived down at Waverly for awhile and fished out on the river, did some farming down in there. I lived at Waverly, and I would go up by his place hunting quite a bit or meet up with him on the river fishing.

M: Where did he sell his fish?

H: Well, he was sort of like me. He and I both felt like the person living in the country raising the stuff, ought not to have any license to catch it and sell it. We would bootleg our fish, first to one and then another who knew that we had fish, even to the game warden once in awhile. He would come around needing fish and so forth. We would supply them for reimbursement for our trouble. We never did sell it to them.

M: Nobody ever came out from West Point looking for your fish?

H: Yes. I used to have regular customers that would come out there from West Point to buy fish. They'd try to get me word that they were going to have a fish fry or fish supper, maybe let me know a week ahead of time that they were going to need fish at such and such a time. Like one game warden told another one day--I had a lot of fish in the hole, and the game warden from Lowndes County was wanting to put the squeeze on me for having a bunch of fish without a fishing license. I told him, "I ain't doing nothing illegal."



I'm allowed to run a hundred hooks without a license." He said, "Yes, that's right, but you can't sell fish without a license." I said, "I don't know what would stop a person from selling fish without a license, but you ain't ever caught me selling fish, have you?" He said, "Well, you have got a lot of fish there." I said, "Yes. I eat a lot of fish, me and my neighbors." The other game warden told him, "Well, I always wait until I catch a man selling fish without a license or hunting without a license before I pick him up." He said, "Let's go." I was one type of person who always felt like the country person raising the game, fish and so forth, should at least have the privilege of getting a return on it without having to pay the state so much for the privilege of going out there and catching it.

Now then, we have talked quite a bit about the community right in and around Vinton. The Schrocks lived up there about a mile west of Vinton schoolhouse. Whether they built the house or whether it was already on the place before the Schrocks moved there, I do not know. It was a four-room frame house with a sealed hallway through it. There was also a store building on the place, just south of the place. When I was about thirteen years old, younger than that, there were in that old store building, two unexploded Civil War cannon projectiles.

M: Where did they come from?

H: There had been a battle up on that place during the Civil War. Someone farming there had plowed those up, I understand. They had carried them up to the store building and put them up.

M: Who shopped at the store?

H: I don't know. I don't know when that store was built, and I don't know who operated it, whether the Schrocks operated it or not. Although, I never did hear anyone say anything about the Schrocks operating the store. When the Wrights lived there on the place, I know that they never did operate it. When I was living down there with the Andrews and around with the Wrights, first one place and then the other, some colored people in behind the Mealer place and the Dick Whatley place were running the store.

M: You were telling me about a store near the Whatley place?

H: That was the Cox place. They were colored people. They lived behind the Dick Whatley place and the Mealer place. That was back north of those two places; that's about two miles back west of the old Vinton schoolhouse. There were some more colored people living up there. I am trying to think of their names. The Vinton community, down and around the schoolhouse, just didn't have any colored people living down that far, for two or three miles.

M: Were there any living closer to the Barton Ferry Road?

H: Yes, Preacher Willis Shirley. That is at the corner of the West Point/Whites Station/Barton Ferry Road.<sup>2</sup> Then, back a little southwest, toward Town Creek on the south side of the road, there were two or three colored families in there. Then you'd get up to the Ellis place; they had several colored families as tenants on their place. There were no colored people down around the Barton Ferry and Vinton community except the old black man who ran Barton ferry for awhile.

M: What was his name?

H: We all called him Bear. I don't know what his last name was. Andy Ellis owned the landing and the ferry, and rented the services of the ferry boat to Clay County for so much a year.

M: What year was that in?

H: I know that Bear was operating there in the mid-1930s, through the last part of the 1930s, probably up into the early 1940s. Black people, I believe, had taken over the operation of the ferry after Dr. Uithoven left off.

M: When did Dr. Uithoven leave it, before he died?

H: Yes, years before he died. I'm quite sure that Dr. Uithoven had quit operating the ferry before 1920. I would think so.

M: There was one other person that I understand owned property on the Barton Ferry Road named Lucy Natcher. Do you remember her?

H: Yes. I remember Miss Lucy Natcher. They owned the land, if I understand right, there somewhere on the south side of the Barton Ferry Road. I don't know if it was joining the old Atkins place or not. I think that you can get ahold of one of those Atkins women who is around here and is still alive.

M: What is her name?

H: I'll have to make a phone call to find out. (makes a phone call)  
I had to get the old lady's first name, Irene Dalkins. She used to live at Vinton, and there were two or three of the boys that I remember going to Vinton School in 1918, I believe.

M: Can you spell Irene's last name?

H: Dalkins. D-A-L-K-I-N-S. Lee Atkins is Irene's brother. There were three of those boys and one or two girls. In 1919, along in there, they packed up. I don't know if they lost the place for taxes or if they sold it, but I understand that they were moving to Arkansas. Mrs. Dalkins is quite a bit older than I am. We should make that

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<sup>2</sup>Also known as the Darracott Road.

interview as soon as we can. There aren't too many of us left, come to think of it. They lived a mile west of the river, near the Barton Ferry landing; that would be this way, on top of a hill. The house was a two-room log house with a dogtrot and side rooms on the south side for a kitchen and dining room, and one extra bedroom.

M: So, they lived right on the Barton Ferry Road, about a mile west, on top of a hill, on the south side of the road?

H: Yes. There was kind of a circle drive going up to their place. I used to go up there when the Dobsons lived there. Cal Phillips bought the place; I don't know from whom. A man named Hufstuttler lived there in the late 1920s.

M: What was his name?

H: Ernest Hufstuttler. H-U-F-S-T-U-T-T-L-E-R. He was originally from Tennessee. Some of them said that all at once he appeared down there. Then, after awhile, his family showed up.

M: Can you describe the house a little more fully?

H: The main building of the house was two rooms made out of logs, with a dogtrot between them. On the south side, there were two side rooms boxed up out of rough lumber. One room was used for a kitchen and dining room. One of the shed rooms, the southeast shed room, was used for a bedroom. The two big rooms were used for bedrooms, and the east end of the house had a brick chimney and fireplace. I don't believe that the west end had a chimney and fireplace. I'm not too sure about that.

M: Where were the windows placed?

H: It had windows in each end and on the front side of each room. The side rooms had windows on each end and on the south side of each room. Each one of the side rooms had two windows, and each one of the main rooms had two windows.

M: What happened to that house?

H: It burned. Cal Phillips and his wife were living there, and someone murdered them, robbed them and burned them up in the building. They were sitting there about a mile from anybody. That happened in probably 1960.

M: Was that a very old house when they lived there?

H: That was an old house, yes, sir. Cal Phillips owned the place when Hufstuttler lived there. Then, the Dobson family moved there, lived there and farmed for several years. I don't know who moved in there after the Dobson family moved out. The Higginbothams lived there for awhile. Then I believe that Cal Phillips moved in and lived there until he and his wife were killed and burned up.

M: Can you tell me a little bit about the house that Ed Wilson used to live in?

H: Up there where Ed Wilson's widow lives, or used to live?

M: It is an old house that sits on the Vinton Road, the first house on the right after you turn off the Barton Ferry Road onto the Vinton Road.

H: I never have been in Ed Wilson's house.

M: Do you remember when it was built?

H: Yeah. That was built back in the 1930s, I believe. Now wait a minute. That house had been built way back before that. Dr. Uithoven, at one time, owned that land. Whether that is part of the old Colson place--I mean Coleman place--or part of the old Vinton place, I'm not sure.

M: The Vintons owned land that far down?

H: Vinton lived on, I understand, quite a lot of land in there somewhere. I understand that the Vinton land was south of the Vinton schoolhouse that I knew. Now, if I understand correctly, the original Vinton schoolhouse stood about three quarters of a mile south of where it was when I went to school. I think it got blown away in a storm. It has been so long ago since those people, old Mrs. Andrews and them, were telling me about that community. They came from Caledonia. They either settled on the Vinton place first or the Coleman place, but they lived on both places. Let's eat. (stop for supper)

M: I wanted to ask about Lucy Natcher.

H: When I first knew Miss Lucy Natcher, she was taking care of Julian Watson. She lived in the old Watson home.

M: What year was that in?

H: The first time I knew of her was about 1916 or 1917. I was a small child, and she would be at Sunday services when they had Sunday school and church at Vinton School. She would drive her horse and buggy with this Watson man in it. He had infantile paralysis. One of his doctors thought that he should have one leg amputated, which they did. That woman would harness the horse, hitch it to the buggy, and then pick this man up in her arms, carry him, and put him in the buggy. I doubt if he would have weighed over ninety pounds. Miss Lucy was a pretty good-sized woman; she wasn't fat. She would drive up to Vinton schoolhouse, and then some of the men would pick Julian up out of the buggy and carry him inside. I must have been six years old when I first knew her.

She has told me about the place that they used to own. If I understood her right, it was on the south side of the Barton Ferry Road

and probably joined the Atkins place. It could have laid between the Atkins place and the old Cox place. Miss Lucy has told me about her being the only child in the family, and going to the woods with her daddy to help him cut down a tree and split rails to build fences. Her father worked as overseer for old man Henry Watson, the first Henry. His son Henry lived at Strongs Station, that would be the first junior. Henry Junior's son, we'll call him Henry the third, he went by Henry Junior as long as his father lived. He finally moved back down to Vinton, moved over west of the original Watson home. Miss Lucy Natcher lived in the old Watson home and took care of Julian Watson as she was able to. In her last days, I believe that the Watsons had a colored woman move over there close to look after Miss Lucy and Julian both. That had to be Maude Strong. After Miss Lucy Natcher died, Maude Strong looked after Julian Watson and the old Watson home until he died. In Maude Strong's time, I think they tore the Watson house down and rebuilt it. She had a home there as long as she lived. I believe that she died there in the old Watson home. She had three boys. The oldest was named Samson, the next one was named Major, and the youngest was Junius. I believe that they are in St. Louis.

M: Their last name is Strong?

H: Yes.

M: Did Lucy Natcher ever talk about her old house, the one where her folks lived?

H: All she ever told me was about them owning a place. I understand it was south of the Barton Ferry Road. She told about helping her father cut trees and split rails, but she never did describe the house that they lived in or anything.

M: I wanted to ask you another question about Cedar Oaks. Did that house ever have four fireplaces?

H: That's the Uithoven house?

M: Yes, the Uithoven house.

H: I don't remember. Two fireplaces are all I can remember. I believe that there is a half-story upstairs in that; it is not a full two-story house. There is a stairway in the hall, going up.

M: You told me last week about a Barton school, and you described to me a house that had been converted to a barn.

H: The school was about two hundred yards east of the Uithoven place. Cedar Grove?

M: Cedar Oaks.

H: Cedar Oaks, is that what they called it? The school looked to me like it had been built as a one-room structure. Some of the old

people have told me about it being used for a school. I know that when I first saw it, I noticed that the partition which separated the two rooms was put in after the house was built and sealed inside because the studs on each side, where the center partition joined the walls, were fastened onto the original sealing. The house had a door facing the east. The last time I saw it, probably in 1939, I believe that Charlie Rhea was using it for a storehouse and so forth.

Now then, about two or three hundred yards west of Cedar Oaks, there was another frame house. That looked like it was built with two 14'x 16' rooms and side rooms hung on it. One of the side rooms was used for the kitchen and dining room, and the other one was used for a bedroom. I don't remember a hallway or dogtrot through that house. Back then they would build a lot of those houses with what we call side rooms. In other words, you would have a wider roof on the back side than you would on the front side. If you had an equal roof, your front side probably had a front porch all the way across it, and the backside would have what we called the two side rooms built onto the two main big rooms. I believe that house had a double fireplace sitting in the center, between the two big rooms.

M: This was the house that sat west of Cedar Oaks. Do you remember what happened to that house?

H: I think that Charlie Rhea, when he was living there with his wife--he married Dr. Uithoven's youngest daughter, Frances--I believe that he converted it to a barn.

M: Do you remember any old buildings that might have been used for business at Barton?

H: No, I don't. I have heard the old people tell about something just south of Barton. That must have been where that Colbert community, or something down in there . . . warehouses on the bank of the river. Uncle Joe Harris told me about a warehouse sitting below the Barton Ferry landing. He said that one winter the river was up above flood stage, and it stayed up a long time. The ground was saturated with water. Then the river took a sudden fall. It fell so fast that--the ground was full of water--the riverbank caved off and took part of this warehouse. A safe was in that warehouse. Uncle Joe said that there was twelve hundred dollars worth of gold in it. He told me that he knew where the safe was, that he had located it, but that it was under about six feet of mud. Back then, nobody had a way to fasten onto the safe, to get cable and chains around it, to pull it out of the mud; there was so much mud. I haven't heard of anyone ever raising that safe. I have heard several of the oldtimers tell about that bank caving and carrying part of the warehouse.

M: Do you know where that warehouse sat?

H: No, I don't. I never have been around on the riverbank there, below Barton Ferry very far.

M: But you think that it is below the Barton Ferry?

H: Yes, Uncle Joe said that it was below the Barton Ferry landing.

M: I understand that there were stores there at one time.

H: I never have seen traces of them. When Dr. Uithoven was running the ferry there, there was a big old log house that sat on the upper side of the road, at the ferry landing, up on a knoll. It was built up on high stilts. If I remember right, it was built dogtrot fashion, two main rooms with side sheds built on it for a kitchen and dining room, and bedroom. It is possible that the house had an upper story to it. I believe that Dr. Uithoven, in our conversation one time, talked about the house burning down years after he had left there. There is something about that being used for a hotel, similar to a hotel.

M: Is that the log house that the Uithovens lived in?

H: Now, whether Cedar Oaks is part of the old Vinton place or the Coleman, or Colson place. . . . I forget what Mrs. Frank Andrews called it. I just don't know. At the time, I was a small kid. They were telling me these things, and I never thought very much about them. Kid-like, we always had something more interesting to do than to worry about. . . .

M: Where things were.

H: Yes.

M: Did you ever hear of a blacksmith there?

H: There was one there somewhere. I don't know whether it was an old man Henry Watson's or who it was owned by. I have heard Uncle Joe tell about him and his daddy working in the blacksmith shop for Henry Watson, on his place.

M: Does the name Levi Hollins ring a bell?

H: No, nothing. That had to be way before my time. I guess that will take care of as much of Miss Lucy Natcher and the Henry Watson place as I can remember and that people have told me. Do you all have any record of a Watkins family in there around Vinton or Barton Ferry?

M: Yes, but we have no idea who they are.

H: Well, I do.

M: Will you tell me?

H: Yes. I wasn't going to school at the time. My brothers and sisters were going to Vinton School. In the early 1900s, a storm came

through the Town Creek community, up there where Homer Tumlinson lives. The county had just built a new wrought iron bridge across Town Creek at the time. That cyclone ripped that out, twisted it up and tore up some houses. This is something that is going to be hard for anyone to believe, but about a quarter mile east of that bridge site, there was a house and some big post oak trees that were probably three foot or larger in diameter. There was a split-rail fence railing driven through one of those trees at about shoulder height.

That storm passed over the Vinton Cemetery and blew a big tree over. When the tree fell over, the roots pulled up a cast iron coffin. My oldest brother has told me that when school was out for dinner, they would go down there and slide the face plate back on the coffin and look at the man inside there. They never did attempt to open the coffin. They said that if they had opened the coffin he would probably have just turned to dust because he had been there so long. Years later, I was talking to Ed Wilson's brother, Willy Wilson, about that coffin that used to be there. I asked him if he knew who it was and what they did with him. There used to be a Miss Katie Watkins who was a schoolteacher at the time my brothers and sisters were going to school at Vinton. Willy Wilson told me that the man was an uncle to her. She had had people come there and rebury him.

I don't know if little Kyle Chandler here in West Point lives in the old Watkins home out there. The road is called Eshman Avenue now. It used to be called East City Limits Road. North from the intersection of Highway 50 and East City Limits Road, we called it the West Point and Aberdeen Road. You talk to Kyle Chandler at Chandler Insurance Agency. The old house was a two-story log home, if I remember about it. You ask him. That thing is still standing there, here on the east side of West Point. He either lives in it, or his mother still lives in it. That is one part of the Watkins home.

M: Was the home moved from Vinton?

H: I don't know if it was moved from out here on the river or whether the people originally left out there around Barton Ferry and Vinton and settled over there. At the time that house was built, it was out from West Point, out from town. The town has built out to it now. Kyle can probably tell you something about that, but I think, if I am not mistaken, that they have gone in there and weather-boarded over those logs.

Willy Wilson told me that the man in the cast iron coffin that had been pulled up by the roots of that tree in that storm was Miss Katie Watkins's uncle. That is the reason I asked you. Now, it could have been an uncle of hers from another side, but I assumed from the way that Willy talked. . . . I believe Willy told me that he was a Watkins. Where the rest of that family went, I don't know.

M: Did any of the old-timers tell you where the goods came from that they sold in the Vinton store?



- H: Some of them would tell about making a trip into West Point every so often to pick up supplies for the store. There were a few trips made to Aberdeen, but I never did hear any talk of supplies coming in by riverboat.
- M: Toward the end of the last century, before the store closed, could they come into West Point and get their goods?
- H: Yes, they would more than likely come into West Pont or maybe cross the river to Columbus. Back when they had boat traffic on the river, people came from as far west as Houston, Mississippi; that was before they had railroads in this country. I've heard those oldtimers tell about hauling their cotton from as far west as Houston down the river around Barton Ferry and down here to Waverly, to put it on barges and send it to Mobile, Alabama and New Orleans.
- M: Was there a road running between Houston and the sites?
- H: There would be a road that came from Houston, probably towards West Point, possibly through Whites Station into Vinton. You see, the way West Point got its name. . . . Over there about where Harry Bandy has his business and holds his auctions on Sunday and Monday. . . .
- M: On the corner of old White Road and Highway 50?
- H: Well, yes. That used to be the farthest point of Lowndes County. I believe Oktibbeha came into there; I believe that Monroe County also came down there. The people coming from the west to bring their cotton and produce to put on the barges out here on the river would have to. . . . It took a lot of them two or three days. Those making it in two days would say that they were going to make it to the point to spend the night. When they were leaving out here on the river, going back through what is now West Point, if somebody asked them where they were going to stop for the night, they would say, "at the western point." So, finally, they went to trying to form this area into a county--they finally did form it into a county--after it was building up there pretty good at Robertson's Crossroads. The community was building up, and they decided, well, what would they name it. They said, "Well, it's the point." Others said, "It's the western point." They finally ended up calling it West Point. The town built up back east after the Mobile and Ohio Railroad built through.
- M: When you were a boy, I bet that you used a buggy to get around.
- H: Well, I'll tell you, we were real poor folks. Most of us, on about every farm, had a wagon. If you were tolerable well-to-do, you ha a buggy. If you were pretty tolerable well-to-do, you had a rubber tire buggy with a top on it, and if you were sure-enough well-to-do, you had a surrey to ride the family around in. I believe that the year my mother died, we had a seven passenger surrey and a pair of matched bay horses.

M: You were really up in the world.

H: Well, we were doing pretty well off: some bees, some cattle, hogs, and turkeys. We used to raise turkeys back in the mid-teens and let them run open range. Then, come time close to Thanksgiving, we got out and went to rounding up turkeys. You always wanted them to come home to a certain roosting place. Then you'd go out there at night, catch them, and tie their legs together. We would make a big, slatted coop out of our wagon bed. The next morning, we'd get out there and maybe had two or three neighbors there with their wagons and teams, and took those turkeys, loaded them in, and hauled them over to West Point. There would be several people who would hire one railroad car, a cattle car. It was a slatted car. You hardly ever see those now, but it was made for hauling livestock in. Enough of the farmers would go together, rent one of those, load it down with turkeys, and send it to St. Louis and Chicago for the Thanksgiving market or the Christmas market. One man would have to go along to see about feeding and watering the birds.

You shipped your livestock the same way. You would buy a ticket, just like you were buying a ticket for a passenger for that man who was to go along to see about tending to your livestock, seeing that they were fed and watered. He would ride in the caboose with the freight conductor and crew. Then when they stopped, he would get out and see about the livestock. That's the way we'd get most of our livestock to market from down in here, the ones that were raising it. We also milked cows. We had a cream separator. I don't know if you ever saw one of those things.

M: What did they look like?

H: The best that I can tell you, they had two models. One of them was a bench model, and the other was a floor model. They had a galvanized bowl. That would hold about five gallons of milk. It had a spicket at the bottom. You had a big crank and twenty-seven cone-shaped discs that sat down on a spindle. They were all numbered, and they had to go together one number on top of the other. You started one, two, three and on to the last one. You didn't mix them up. If you mixed them up, even one of them, they would not separate the cream from the milk. You also had to turn and get those whirling at a certain rate. You had an indicator, a needle that would get up there when you got so many rpms, then you could turn your milk on. It had two spouts sticking out from that housing that the discs sat in. I believe that the bottom spout was the longest. The skimmed milk went out through that spout. The top spout was the shortest. It faced another direction to put the cream in the can. The doggone things worked. But I'll tell you what. Those things would sure work a poor old little country boy to death to separate those gallons of milk. They would do the job.

M: What kind of milk cans were you using?

H: We were using regular milk cans like they have now. They were heavy-gage sheet metal with a tin coating.

M: Did somebody pick the milk up?

H: Nope. We had to haul milk up--that was when we were living at the foot of Knox Hill--or we'd haul the cream up to Whites Station, flag the westbound passenger train down at about seven o'clock in the morning, and put the cream in the baggage car. Then it was delivered over to West Point, to the King Creamery. I believe, at that time, we were getting about thirty cents a pound for cream. Sometimes, if we had to go to town for something, we would get up and go early enough to haul the cream to the creamery before the weather got hot. If it was in the summertime, the heat soured it. We saved that twenty-five cents that it would take to haul it from Whites Station to West Point.

M: I've heard some people say that they raised goats out there.

H: Dr. Uithoven had some goats and sheep.

M: Did anybody ever make their own cheese out there?

H: I don't think that they ever made any cheese out there. I just don't know, never heard of it, but Dr. Uithoven used to have some goats.

M: I was going to ask you if you had ever seen a funeral out there. What kind of a funeral did people have out there?

H: It was about like what they have now. I know when they buried old man Dick Whatley out at Vinton. . . . The community would go. The preacher would come and they might probably sing a song or two. The preacher would give his eulogy, and say what he had to. Some of those old preachers would get kind of long winded and tell about what a saint some devil was. The community would get together and dig a grave. As soon as they put the remains in, they would cover it up. Then everybody would go about their business.

M: How deep were the graves?

H: Here in this area, they generally dig a grave six foot deep.

M: Were the coffins made of wood?

H: Yes. You could get coffins made out of wood, or you could buy copper coffins, buy cast iron.

M: Were they ever put in vaults?

M: Now, there were a few vaults, and there were some graves dug, what we called, vault type. In other words, we would dig a grave wider at the bottom. . . . Then we would dig the grave wide enough to take the box. After the remains were placed in the box, we put the lid on the box. Then there would be a bunch of planks cut to go across on top of the coffin and each end rested on a earthen bench

which to me seemed kind of dumb. On each side of that we would backfill. If somebody was going to die and you are going to put them in the ground. . . .

- JM: This is a on-site interview with Mr. James "Honeybee" Hendrix for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Jim McClurken. The date is February 24, 1980. We're at the Barton Ferry landing, standing on the bluff north of the landing.
- JH: There should be some brick in here from a chimney to the old Uithoven log house. I feel like it sat right in here, at the edge of the bluff, more than it did further north. It was built lengthways north and south with the front on the west side. It was about a story-and-a-half or a two-story log structure.
- JM: Did it have a porch?
- JH: A porch on the front and framed-up rooms back on the east side.
- JM: Two side rooms made of plank?
- JH: Yes, I believe that this was the east end of the old house right in here, by that prickly ash. This looks like bark off of one of the old apple trees. (examines bark from an old stump)
- JM: Was there an orchard right beside the house?
- JH: There were some fruit trees, the best that I can remember. I was about seven or eight years old the first time that I ever saw this house, probably seven years old. We came down one Sunday. My oldest brothers fished and swam in the river, and my dad helped Doctor Uithoven with his bees. Doctor had bees in log hives, old shotgun hives. Shotgun hives are hives of bees made out of pieces of plank an inch thick and twelve inches wide. Four pieces were nailed together, and they would be anywhere from about knee-high to waist-high. They called them shotguns; back then they called them "bee gums."
- JM: Did they have any hardware on them?
- JH: No, they were just nailed together, and that was it. Doctor's house was a tolerable long house, and those rooms, the best that I can remember, should have been about 16'x 18' rooms with a dogtrot between them.
- JM: What kind of a roof did the house have on it?
- JH: It had cypress shingle roof, not shingle but board. There's a difference between a shingle and a board. A shingle is smoothed down to lay flatter than a board. A board will generally be two feet to thirty inches long where a shingle will be about eighteen inches long.
- JM: Did Doctor Uithoven ever have a tool shed or a smokehouse on his place?

JH: I don't remember from just that one time.

JM: Do you remember an outhouse up here?

JH: No. I remember coming up to the front porch for something or other. I don't remember what I did that for, even.

JM: Where did they keep their water?

JH: The best that I know, they got their water from the springs over across the road. There are some big springs right over there across the road, and it's good water. Yes sir, good free-stone water.

JM: Did they carry it up to the house in tin buckets?

JH: Well, a lot of buckets were made out of cedar, back then. If you were well-to-do, you would buy a metal bucket with baked-on enamel.

JM: So, they did have a few of those?

JH: Yeah, they probably had some, but your wooden buckets would last the longest. I understand that this was a . . . it seems that this log house in here was also kind of a inn or hotel for travelers. That's what I understand just from old folks talk.

JM: Did Doctor Uithoven ever have a barn up here on this hill?

JH: I never noticed. In my opinion, they would have to have something up here to get the stock out of the high water in the wintertime. This house sat up from the ground about waist-high. Sometimes the river would get up enough to cover this knoll a foot deep.

JM: Was this house on brick piers?

JH: It was on cypress piers, cypress logs.

JM: Were they cut square or were they round?

JH: They were left rounded.

SM: Do you have any idea when this house was built?

JH: No, I don't, no idea whatever.

SM: But it was thought to be an old hotel before Doctor Uithoven had it?

JH: The best that I can understand from the old settlers, some of the people that helped raise me. I don't know who owned the place before Doc bought it. I don't know if this here and the old Uithoven house up there, Cedar Oaks, were on the same property at the time or if it was different owners.

JM: Do you know what year Doc Uithoven came here?

JH: No, I don't know when he came to Clay County. I think it was sometime after 1900. Doc originally settled over here across the river, about four miles from where we are now, and built a two-story house. He also built some smaller houses and was going to start a Dutch colony over there. It didn't take good, but he built several houses and had people come over from Holland. It just broke up and went.

JM: Were there any other houses here on this bluff?

JH: I don't remember anymore. This is the only house I remember on this block up here. What houses I saw after this, were back up on the hills.

JM: Didn't the old-timers tell you about some houses on the south bluff at Barton?

JH: Are you talking about south of the Barton Ferry Road?

JM: Yes.

JH: Yes. Uncle Joe Harris would tell about one or two warehouses that used to be down below the ferry landing. There was undoubtedly part of a town left down there from what he said. He also told about the river staying up so long that the ground got saturated with water. One of the warehouses was built close to the riverbank, and the river fell several feet overnight. The water dropped fast. The ground was so saturated with water that the soil couldn't drain fast enough, and one corner of that warehouse caved off into the river with the safe with twelve hundred dollars worth of gold and silver in it.

JM: Were there ever any attempts made to find it?

JH: Uncle Joe said that several attempts had been made. He knew where it was, but it was under about ten feet of mud. He said that he had located the safe several times with an iron rod, and he knew where the warehouse was. He knew what part caved off; he knew about where to look.

JM: Were there any remains of that place left in your boyhood?

JH: I never have been down to that area in there. I have always gone to the river from across Town Creek and traveled a little bit north and south a piece. I don't think I've been over a hundred yards down below the Barton Ferry Road here, across on that bluff down there.

JM: Can you tell us a little bit about the way the driveway was situated on this hill?

JH: The road that we used today has been put in lately. The old road

that came around this hill and came up on the east side of the bluff. We'll walk over there, and I can show you. The road came up to the side of the house, at one time. That's the place back there. It came up from the ferry landing over here. Yeah, this is the original road up to this house. Now, what was further back in here, I don't know. I never did see anything.

JM: Was there a smaller shotgun house that the ferrymen generally lived in down here below the log house somewhere?

JH: No, everybody that I know of who ran the ferry lived in the log house until it burned. Then there was a one or two room shed put up back in there where the old original house. . . . That concrete slab over there has been poured recently. Somebody's rented this land for a camphouse, poured that slab, and built on it.

JM: Is that on top of the old log house?

JH: I don't think so. That elm tree there is one of the old original trees. It would have to have been quite small at the time the log house was standing. That's about all that's left of the old original trees around here except those two big oaks over there. Now, they're original.

JM: Did you eat with the Uithoven's the first time you came here?

JH: No, not down here that I remember.

JM: Do you remember a china cupboard in the house?

JH: No, I never was in this house. Now, he had it up at the other place. He had some old furniture up there that he had used here. The washstands had marble tops on them, and I believe that at one time they had two large, porcelain bowls and pitchers. I don't think they were china. They may have been china bowls and pitchers, but I believe they were porcelain.

JM: Were they plain white, or were they decorated?

JH: I believe they were plain white, similar to what I have. I've got a set up there at the house.

JM: So, as far as you know, did he bring those plain, white dishes with him to the next house?

JH: Yes. I know they were in the next house up there. I don't know whether Doctor was living here when this burned or not. I believe that I may have been living up in Monroe County, up at Strongs Station, at the time when this house burned.

JM: So, that would have been in the 1920s?

JH: It had to be in the early 1920s. In about 1917 or along there, I



believe, was the first and only time I saw this house here. Then I wasn't in Doc's house anymore until after he moved up on the hill. I believe that the next time that I was up in there, I was just about thirteen years old, in about 1923, along there.

SM: There are some old depressions back there, north of this house. I was wondering if you remember a well or an outhouse or something like that.

JH: I don't know. That's something that somebody has dug recently. There's a good possibility that someone has dug up some flowers or something. I notice there is still one stalk of the old yucca around here.

JM: Did they have those flowers all around the house?

JH: Jim, I just don't remember; it's been so long ago. Here's part of his garden back here. You see that bed of garlic?

JM: Yes.

JH: Okay, all those old settlers brought the garlic with them whether they brought anything else for the garden or not.

JM: Where was the garden located?

JH: I don't remember. You walk out where all this undergrowth is in those big pines, and you will probably find the old rows there. Let's walk out here. We can find those rows, then I can tell you which way it laid. It's gonna show up in here somewhere. It's got a lot of leaves and stuff on it. Here we are. The rows run north and south here. There's a middle over there, and here's your other middle. We'll scratch around over here, and we'll find another row, more than likely. But, you see, it has been years since this land was farmed. Timber has probably been cut off here before these trees grew back.

JM: Do you think this next clearing, just north of the house clearing, was part of the original?

JH: That's a possibility, but things have grown up. . . . Now this could be, Jim, where people have rented sites for camphouses here and cleared up.

JM: Do you recall any buildings up here?

JH: Well, Jim, come here and let me show you something that you are going to run into. (moves to a gravel pit northwest of the house) I think this is some dirt from the old gravel pit. We washed gravel right over there to pave Highway 45 from West Point to Okolona in 1933 or 1939, I believe.

JM: What kind of tools were you using to get the gravel out of there?

JH: We used hydraulic pumps powered by eighty-five horsepower Caterpillar diesel motors.

JM: You didn't use many hand tools?

JH: No. There's a good possibility that there could have been houses back up in there, and we washed those sites up. That was in 1938 and 1939. Let's walk on up in here a little bit more. Now, some of this was a clearing when I worked here. All this stuff has grown up since we washed gravel out. There were two or three people who had shanties put up here to live in. Let's look right over here a little bit.

JM: When were these shanties put up?

JH: They were put up when the company moved the gravel pit in to wash the gravel back in the late 1930s. After World War II was over with in the last part of the 1940s, Frank Campbell rented the gravel rights from Mrs. Ellis, and he has washed around in here. These mounds of dirt are where he used a dragline to strip the overburden off of the gravel. When we were in here washing gravel, we used a dragline to cut the overburden off and pile it back out of the way. When you wash a lot of dirt, it's costing you. It's cheaper to strip that back and pile it up so you don't have to run it through your dredge pump.

JM: Where were your pumps sitting?

JH: They were on barges floating out there in the gravel pit. I believe that we had one washer sitting right back out there.

JM: That's in the clearing just north of the house clearing?

JH: Well, yes sir. They had six-inch iron pipes that were flanged on each end with bolt holes through them. We also had flexible joints where we had to make a curve. The company would get a bunch of oil drums and make a barge with two drums. They'd lay the discharge pipe of the washer across it. Then you had a six-inch pipe on the pump, and it was on a flexible joint. You dropped that down, got an engine revved up, your pump going and primed. You revved that up and trapped that nozzle down in the water. You had a power-operated winch with a cable fastened to your sucker. You could gradually raise and lower the sucker. Of course, the man operating the dredge pump couldn't see what he was doing, but with his experience and listening to the way his motor was laboring--he would watch his plume of water as it come over in the washer--he could tell whether he was getting his sucker down too deep in the gravel and choking down or if he was up too high and wasn't lifting the gravel.

JM: Do you think we will find any tools left over from the gravel operation in these sites?

JH: Well, I don't know. It's so grown up around here, and Frank Campbell has been in here since then. I had forgotten about this when we were here last Sunday. When we were washing gravel, a man by the name of Compton had a little store out here. I believe that he had that set up over there, about where we have the trucks parked. (west of present entrance road to Structure B-17)

JM: What kind of store was it?

JH: Oh, he had about a 10'x 12' framed-up room. He slept in one end of it, and he had his counters in the other. He sold sardines, crackers, and such as that to the people who were working here when we were washing.

JM: That's just west of the log house site?

JH: I'd say it's about southwest.

JM: Was it north of the Barton Ferry Road?

JH: It was north of the road.

JM: We are standing on the Barton Ferry Road about a quarter of a mile west of the Barton Ferry landing.

JH: There's a road here that should bear off back to the north. At one time Lee Alton "Flop" Duke had a fish house and beer joint out here. If you people run into any bottles and such as that in that area, it's not original. That was in the 1930s, from the middle to the last part of the 1930s when that operated.

JM: Can you give me some kind of description of the place, the dimensions?

JH: It was about twelve feet wide and about twenty-four feet long. His living quarters were built in the west end.

JM: Did it have a porch?

JH: No, it just had what we call a "shanghai" shed. In other words, it was a shed put up with the roof sloping one way; it didn't have a roof with a peak to it.

JM: Was it on pillars?

JH: It was built on wooden blocks, about a foot high. It was thrown up temporarily.

JM: Did they sell primarily liquor?

JH: Well principally, I do believe. Let's say he ran a drugstore out here. (laughter) It sat along in there. When you go to looking down through this string of trees, that looks sort of like an old

roadway down through there. His joint would have to set right over there. I guess you would call that the Barton Ferry Drugstore.

JM: We are at the first site east of the road that leads to Cedar Oaks.

JH: Now, in here we're in close to the original road from Barton Ferry up to Vinton, Darracott, and Aberdeen. At the Vinton schoolhouse, it forked and the left branch went through Whites Station and connected with the West Point/Aberdeen Road.

JM: Did you know anything about this house site?

JH: No, I don't ever remember a house being here.

JM: You told me something about those red piles there?

JH: These piles of dirt looks like red clay. This has been dug from way down in the ground or out of a steep clay bank. This looks like a fireplace and chimney site which was built out of what they call "cattails." It was a mixture of clay and sage grass, mixed up and patted out in a roll about four inches in diameter and probably a foot to a foot-and-a-half long. They were stacked so they would tie themselves together. The people would make some splits out of a small tree to build their form, and then they would stack the clay mixture between the form. They would put them together similar to the way a mason stacks brick, now. They locked together, the way they were stacked. The people didn't have the money to buy brick, so they dug them up some clay, cut them some sage grass, and mixed them up cattail, to build their chimney. When they got their chimney and fireplace built, if they had time, they let it dry a little while. They would only build a form up with wooden stakes as far as the hearth was going to be. Then they could stack all the way around to build the flue or the chimney part, and they didn't have to have a form. And they would pat those out with their hands and slick it up. They mixed some salt in with that clay and grass, and that grass just never would catch fire. The salt would draw enough moisture to keep that sage grass from catching on fire.

JM: How long would you say that one of these chimneys with the unfired brick would last?

JH: Oh, I've seen several. I must have been forty when one old man showed me the remnants of a chimney and fireplace that his daddy built before the Civil War. That was about 1955 when he showed me the remnants. The house was a log house. The logs and all had been torn down, and there was about six feet of the chimney still standing. It takes it a long time to erode away.

JM: Could this little hill that you're standing on be that old?

JH: I believe that's what that looks like here. You may possibly dig some bricks out around here somewhere. If you do, that will probably

be where they used a few brick to build a flue for the kitchen stovepipe to go up through.

I don't know whether this is a part of the original road over there or not. (refers to road parallel to present road to Cedar Oaks) I don't think so. But there's a possibility that there's been more than one house built back up this ridge, and they came out through here. You see how this is worn down in the bank?

JM: Was this road in use when you were living back at the old Uithoven house?

JH: No.

JM: Was it already abandoned?

JH: Yes, it's been abandoned for years. You said something or other about another house site over there. Let's go see what that is. If I ever need persimmon wedges, there's a nice tree that will make them.

JM: What did this stretch of land look like when you were out here?

JH: Well, when I first knew, this was in pasture, here. The farming was back over on the more level land.

JM: Was this land ever plowed?

JH: It's possible that it was before I ever knew it, Jim, but I don't remember any farming in here. This was pastureland in here at one time. Doc did his farming back over around the house (Cedar Oaks) and back northwest, towards where Ed Wilson lived.

JM: Now, we've got a well here on the east side of the road and it's lined with brick. Can you tell us anything about this well?

JH: Well, last Sunday was the first time I ever knew this well was here. I can tell you one thing, that well had to supply water for two or three houses or more around here because they went to the trouble of lining it with brick. Here's what I'm thinking. A well like that probably had, at one time, a pretty good-size house sitting here. There is a possibility that what you people are looking at now could be slave quarters or something. I don't know but that's just. . . . And this could be one of the wells.

JM: But, they usually didn't brick a well unless they were used by several homes?

JH: No, as a rule they didn't. A man who thought that much of his well had a pretty good house sitting somewhere on this hill.

JM: Would they usually line them with wood or anything like that?

JH: Sometimes they would put what they called a "wooden curb" in, but the most common is brick if they're going to line them.

SM: So, they usually don't line them at all?

JH: That's the usual thing, that they don't. If you crib a well up with wood, that wood rots and it all caves in. I expect that this well is probably as old as Barton. Those bricks are not mortared together; they're stacked in there. They locked themselves in and then the water seeps in between them.

SM: We've never found any mortar anywhere. When we found the bricks in some of our pits, we never found any mortar.

JM: What kind of mortar were they using in house piers?

JH: A lot of that had oyster shells crushed in it. It would not exactly be like mortar now, as you buy mortar that's already mixed with the lime, sand, and a small amount of the cement. If you get to looking at most of the old antebellum houses around here, you will find that the mortar seems to have used crushed oyster shells instead of lime; you will find a lot of crushed oyster shells in that old mortar.

JM: How did that mortar hold up?

JH: It held up pretty good. It was soft mortar; it wasn't the hard mortar like they have now.

JM: Would it fall off the bricks?

JH: Yes sir, it'll fall off easy. When we get back over to the place, I may be able to show you some of that.

JM: So, it wouldn't be unusual for the bricks to be clean?

JH: No, it wouldn't be unusual for the bricks to be clean.

JM: Okay, that helps a lot.

JH: I remember the house on the ridge to the left of the road over there. I remember the house up there on the Ed Wilson place and the one that was there before it. That's not the same structure there.

JM: Can we talk about that when we get up to it?

JH: Yeah. I forgot to show you back yonder, but y'all have noticed what looked like an old roadbed over. . . .

SM: Yes.

JH: Alright, now that's part of your old Barton Ferry/Vinton/Darracott/Aberdeen Road. Up at the old Vinton schoolhouse, as I knew it, a left

branch goes up through Whites Station. Up at old Payne Field, it connects with the West Point/Strongs Station/Aberdeen Road up there.

JM: This old road that runs nearly parallel to the road we're walking on went to Cedar Oaks?

JH: That is the way I understand the old people.

JM: Yeah, who was it that told you about this route?

JH: The Andrews that I stayed with at Vinton heard the Wilson's talk about it. Old Doctor Uithoven has told me about it being the old road.

You got two big cedars here. I don't ever remember a house being there, but those cedars are mighty close to a house site, I believe. (Structure B-16)

JM: We are at the top of the first ridge west of Cedar Oaks.

JH: Look, you got a big cedar there. See the top of that cedar? At one time that cedar, years and years ago, has been topped to make it spread so that it wouldn't get so tall and the wind break it in two. That cedar tree is well over a hundred years old, so is that one over there. There could well be a house site in here somewhere. A lot of people like cedars around their house.

SM: Do you remember this old road that's coming down here, this big depression area?

JH: Well, I'll tell you something. They didn't have gravel on these roads. They didn't know that they could go to these gravel bars, haul the gravel, and fix them a good road. As the road would get too muddy, they would just take an ax and cut them out another way. While this side was drying, they'd be using the new road. That new road would get too rough and muddy; then they'd probably use the old road again. Out in here and down around Waverly, on the roads coming out from Waverly, you will find different places that they have used for a roadbed, although it will still be the same road. The name will be the same. I can show you where some of the roads will vary a quarter of a mile. There's a good possibility that Doc and them built this new road in here.

There's a possibility that we could be standing on a house site here that this road is built over. I don't even know who Doc bought this land from. That tree there looks like it has been corner tree for a yard; it has been wounded years and years ago. Now you see over here, this looks like it could have cornered, probably for a paling fence, a rail probably went down in there and probably in here. After all these years, that dead wood in there is rotting through.

JM: Is that a common practice?

JH: Yes, to fasten a fence corner on a tree. That could have been a corner tree there for a yard fence.

JM: How did they cut the notches in the tree?

JH: With a sharp-bladed instrument. That's smooth, you see?

JM: What kind of a tree is that?

JH: That's a water oak or a pin oak. Most of the evergreen oaks have been cut out. There's a big old hackberry tree there that could have been close to the house.

LH: It's got places on it like that old oak tree.

(move to location north of B-16)

JH: Now this is a trench silo. Some people would dig them square, back into a bank like this. They would estimate how many tons of silage they were going to put down. They'd throw the dirt back to the side, get this regular old black roofing paper, and they would line the ditch. They would set the silage chopper up on one side of the bank, and they would haul the silage in from the field, power the chopper with the power take-off on a tractor or with a separate power unit, cut the silage, and blow it down in the trench. At the end of each day they would cover that silage over with black roofing paper and then throw the dirt over it. They'd keep on until they filled it. At the ends, they'd put black paper up and throw dirt up against it to seal it. A lot of them would load silage on a wagon, haul it out, and put it in troughs for the stock to eat. Some people would build a gate across the end of the pit with stantions so that a cow could just stick its head through and eat their way back. As they ate the silage, they would shove that gap back and feed themselves.

JM: Who put this silo up?

JH: Charlie Rhea did; Charlie Rhea put this here.

JM: Do you know the year?

JH: 1939.

JM: Did he dig this by hand?

JH: He dug this with mules and slip scraper. See, all these trees have grown up in there since it was built. This was at the edge of his lot up here. His barn and lot was back out in there. I never will forget. . . . Charlie had an old milk cow that got down. When a cow bogs down, gets down, they have a habit of giving up. They'll lay there and die. That old cow laid there and laid there, and we would help Charlie turn the cow over every morning before we went to



work. When we came in at night, we'd help him turn her over, get her up and try to exercise her. The old cow wouldn't do anything. Well, just as we ended this job up down here, there came about a three-inch snow in November, along about close to Thanksgiving, I believe. Charlie got up and came out here. I said, "Well, I better go turn the old cow." He said, "Naw, ain't no need to do that. That dad-blasted old heifer is up and hunting something to eat this morning." (laughter)

Doc had his sheep and goats here. His son-in-law said that Doc, in the fall of the year, would go to town and buy a hundred-pound bag of cottonseed meal, and then come back by a farmer and buy about a ninety-pound bale of hay. He'd wait until the weather got real cold, snow and sleet and such, about like we had a week or two ago. Doc had a little four-pound lard bucket with a tablespoon. He would get that tablespoon full of cottonseed meal for his sheep and pull out a handful of straw for the goats. When the goat came up, he'd give the goat a couple of straws. When the sheep came up, he'd give them a tablespoon full of cottonseed meal. One old ewe kept butting Doc, wanting to get more meal. Directly old Doc said, "Oh, be goin' on. I be feeding you so much now, your belly be busting."

JM: This looks like there was a corner of a road here. Do you know what this would have been?

JH: This would be that old road coming in from Barton Ferry and going up through Vinton, if I understand the old people right.

JM: Was this road used in your lifetime?

JH: No, I never remember this being used for anything except probably for going to the fields.

JM: Do you recall any houses that sat along this road?

JH: Not along this road in here, but there was one back on the ridge over here.

JM: Okay, let's go back to the ridge. (pause) What's this fence for? (fence south of trench silo)

JH: This was around Doc's goat and sheep pasture, and that old wire is old.

JM: Did he put it up?

JH: Yeah, I'm pretty sure he and his stepsons put it up. Now, Jim, you can see the impression of the old road over there, and you see it's grown up in trees that are bound to be fifty years old, as large as they are. If you'll look around on these ridges, there are some more pretty good-size cedars and oak back up there. Those trees could be on the fence row and left, but it looks more like it's around an old house site.

JM: We're on the third ridge west of Cedar Oaks.

JH: I think this is the ridge that there was some sort of a old shed on years ago.

JM: What kind of an old shed?

JH: There wasn't very much of it left when I remembered it; it had fallen down. Out in the fields, they would build what they'd call a "cotton house." They would pick cotton and would maybe store two or three-hundred pounds in it at a time, until they got enough for about fifteen-hundred pounds of seed cotton to make a bale. Then they carried it to the gin.

JM: How big a shed was this?

JH: It looked like it was something like about 12'x 14', the remnants I saw of it.

JM: Was it on pillars?

JH: Yes, it was up on blocks, and I think this was a field shed. I don't think there was a house here, but this has all grown up. The farming was down in these hollows and around. They farmed these hollows. These hills were so doggone poor that they couldn't make anything. They didn't have anything for fertilizer, didn't know any.

JM: So, all the farming was done at the foot of the hill?

JH: Yes, down in these hollows, in these little valleys.

JM: Do you have any idea where on the hill this shed sat?

JH: I was thinking that it sat right up here on the top.

JM: Right up in the curve in the road.

JH: Yes. If it was rainy or wet, they could get to the shed and haul whatever they had stored in it, out of the weather. Now, that's nothing but a gully wash there; that's not nothing of an old road or anything there. (points to an eroded place)

JM: Did they ever dump their garbage in a gully?

JH: I don't know; some of them might have. There's something about this hill. There might have been a dwelling house. There will be some sort of signs around here somewhere if there was.

JM: What did this land look like?

JH: This was open. Back over next to the road was open pasture. That was cleared up, and Doc's farming was back over this way in these valleys.

SM: At the edge of this ridge, just north of the Barton Ferry Road, there's a lot of yuccas and some hackberry.

JH: Does this ridge go back to the gate?

SM: No. It just goes pretty much straight north and south right down to the Barton Ferry Road.

JH: Now, how far would that yucca be back for the Barton Ferry Road?

SM: It's only about forty feet north of the road.

JH: Well, can we take a look at it from the road down there?

SM: Oh, yeah, that would be better.

JH: That would be better than walking way down there, walking way back up here again, and walking over to this other ridge. (pause) Now, these little hollows, these little swags in here, were farmed at one time.

JM: They never farmed the top ridge, just the gullies?

JH: Well, when it was first cleared up, these top ridges were fertile, too. Then those old settlers cleared it up and it washed away. In other words, they ended up with the bottom soil on the hills and the topsoil down in the bottom.

JM: What kind of plows were they using on this farm?

JH: That man's tools would probably consist of a breaking plow, turning plow we called them, and in the sandy land they wanted plows made out of cast iron.

JM: Were they wooden up here?

JH: No. Some of them would probably have a wooden beam and foot with the plows fasten to it. Some of them would have a steel beam.

JM: Would the sweep be wood or would that be steel?

JH: The sweep, the plows that. . . . The Georgia stock is made out of wood. That's a sweepstock. Your "double shovel," as they called them, was made out of steel. They carried two sweeps at a time; you could work a row at a time with that. You would have a top harrow. That was a V-shaped harrow with handles. It was made in a "V" shape and it carried, I believe, four big teeth down each side and four across the back of it. You got up on top of a row and harrowed it down pretty flat for planting. Then you had your section harrow, if you were affluent. That was made in two square sections about 4'x 4' each with about two dozen teeth to the square. Some of these old fellows would make the complete harrow out of wood and it would do a good job, use wooden pegs for the teeth.

JM: Now we're at the Keller house. (Structure B-3)

JH: Let's see, Thomas Keller lived at this old house site, at one time. David Keller lived here at one time, and the Beard family lived here at one time.

JM: Did they rent this?

JH: They were relatives of Doc. Thomas Keller and David Keller were Doc's stepsons, and Mrs. Beard was Doc's sister-in-law. I just think he let them have it rent free.

JM: What kind of a house was this?

JH: This had two main rooms about 16'x 18' each. I believe you're going to find that the fireplace sat in the center of this house. If I remember right, it had two 10'x 18' rooms over on the east side. One room was used for a kitchen and dining room and another room was used for a bedroom. I don't remember offhand just how the setup was in the house.

JM: Did the house sit north and south?

JH: The house sat north and south, and I believe the main porch was to the west. Then on the south end, it had a smaller porch built onto one of the main rooms, one of the big rooms.

JM: Did this house sit up off the ground?

JH: It was up on wooden blocks, the best I remember.

JM: Did it have windows in it?

JH: Yes, it had two windows to the rooms.

JM: Were they on the north end or the south end?

JH: If I remember the main room right, it had two windows in it, one in the south end and one to the west. The north room had one window to the back and one window to the west. The northeast side room had one window to the north and one to the east. The southeast side room had one window to the south and one to the east. They had a back door to the kitchen, to the east. I believe that southeast room was the kitchen, the kitchen and the dining room.

JM: Did you ever visit these people who lived here?

JH: I've been here three times in my life.

JM: What kind of cup did they serve you coffee in?

JH: Well, I never drank, never even ate a meal in here.

JM: Do you remember how the house was furnished?

JH: No. Back then, I would say that, no larger than those people's families were, they would have one bed to the room, and probably a dresser or a chifforobe, or maybe a dresser and a washstand in one room. They might have a bed and some trunks in another room and such as that. They would have straight-back chairs, most of them, and might near every family had a couple of rocking chairs. They would have cane backs and cane bottoms unless they were rebottomed with white oak splits or hickory bark.

JM: Where was the water supply for this house?

JH: I don't know, but I think that it came from the well over in front of Doc's house. I think they hauled the water in.

JM: Where did they keep their rain buckets and their rain barrel?

JH: I don't know, but I'm quite sure they had two or three sitting around the eaves of the house to catch rainwater for wash water.

JM: Did they have aluminum eaves?

JH: No, they didn't have any. Very few houses in the country were guttered. In other words, water just ran off the eaves. Sometimes you will find what they call a jug well or a cistern. That's a big dug down, hollowed out hole in the ground. They'd make a V-shape wooden trough and hang it under the eaves of the house to catch their water in the wintertime. It ran in there, and they would have cold water all summer.

SM: Were there any other structures out behind here?

JH: Not that I can remember.

JM: Do you know where they dumped their garbage?

JH: No.

SM: Was there an outhouse here?

JH: I imagine that they just took off to the closest bushes. (pause)

JM: Do you remember anything about this tinware sitting here on the side of the road?

JH: This is part of an old Model-T fender, I do believe. Let's see now. That's about a 1913 or 1914 model. Let's see if I can reconstruct that. That's a piece of your Model-T Ford. Old Doc had a couple that David and Tom Keller drove. Now let's see, this has got to go in there. This was bolted where this fender brace was fastened to the body. That could be part of the front, but you just imagine a fender sitting out about like that over the front or

the back of a wheel about thirty-six inches high, wheel, tire, and all. That's what that is. That's part of a Model-T Ford about a 1913 or 1914 model.

JM: This is more of the car?

JH: Yeah, this is more of it. These other fellows (archaeologists) might want to shoot me for turning this over, but this is part of it's body. They had a rim of wood that went around in these old bodies. This metal was nailed to it. See these nails? That's pretty good metal to last from 1913 or 1914. Now let's get this other piece out. This top . . . this was a phaeton, a convertible to you young people.

JM: What was that word?

JH: A touring car. In other words, a convertible to you young people. You could fold your top back. Let's see what this piece of the body broke from. I think that this was a piece of the back. I know that had to be a piece of the back, back there. We've got some more; let's see which fender this was. This is part of the body. I wonder what he knocked that hole through there for. It was some sort of a light. (pause)

You'll notice how the stock have tromped around in here near the Rhea barn. It's tromped might near straight down from that fence on this side, and on the other side of that fence it gradually slopes up. That's where your stock will tromp and work a hillside down.

JM: What can you tell us about this barn?

JH: Well, I believe that Charlie Rhea built this sometime in the mid-1930s, after he married Frances Uithoven and moved here. Some of these planks on the barn are from the old house site that we just left, where we were looking at the old Model-T Ford parts.

JM: That's the old Keller house?

JH: Yes, Tom Keller lived there and so did David Keller. That is a piece of blue-heart poplar plank out of the old house. If you will look, you'll see these old planks have weathered up and down. They are plank that have been pulled off a house where they were nailed on vertical instead of horizontal. This is something that might have come from his daddy's sawmill. That was a rough job. I don't know who set the saw up, but it sure was running rough, wobbling, teeth out of line.

I believe that Doc had his sheep sheds back east there. I don't think you'll even find any sign of those over there. It's been so long. (move to well west of Structure B-14)

This used to be a good size, overflowing, artesian well. The last time I saw it, it had a little old pitcher pump on it with about an

eighteen-inch handle. Sometimes they didn't hold prime too well, and you'd have to pour a cup of water in them and pump like heck. He was probably going to put an electric pump on it. At Waverly they used a hydraulic ram. You might have to go off down this little swag until you got about a two foot drop to give it pressure, if you were to use one here. Then the pressure of your water and your air would pump the water.

JM: Did they ever use the hydraulic ram at Cedar Oaks?

JH: I don't know; I was just thinking about going down here and looking to see if I could find a place where they might have set one in this ditch somewhere, a pipe coming from this way to the house. It will probably be a three-quarter-inch pipe, if they had a hydraulic ram. This is the logical place that he would have set it.

JM: What kind of pipe would it be?

JH: Galvanized, more than likely.

JM: When would they have put it in?

JH: Years and years and years ago. I don't know when that was invented, probably a couple of hundred years ago.

JM: But they wouldn't have put it in here until the 1920s?

JH: Well, whoever owned the house before him might have. All those old houses around Waverly used to have a hydraulic ram to lift water. You know where the old mansion is. That well is about a quarter of a mile south from the house. They had a hydraulic well there to pump water up into a tank that used to sit behind the kitchen of that old mansion. I've seen it in operation.

LA: Now, there is a well right behind Cedar Oaks, a brick-lined well.

JH: Dug well?

LA: Yes.

JH: That's what I say. This brick-lined well over here must have been a good size.

JM: Was this the original road up to the house?

JH: So far as I know. Do you have anything on the Sandifords?

JM: No, who are they?

JH: Alright, well, Sandiford--now listen, this road to Cedar Oaks used to be lined with flowers, jonquils, on each side; I believe that's what those were--married one of Doctor Uithoven's stepdaughters. I'm trying to think of her name. There was one boy I know

or maybe a boy and a girl. I'm trying to think of her. . . . They're divorced, separated. The old yard fence used to be here. Before the mid-1920s, Sandiford and his wife was having some trouble. They said Sandiford was drunk and she was back here staying with her mama and Doctor Uithoven. Sandiford came and wanted to talk to her or something or other. They wouldn't let him talk to her, or she didn't want to talk to him or something or other. He started through the gate, and Tom Keller blasted down on him with an old single-barreled shotgun and some number-six shot. Tom kind of tore the seat of his britches up and he took off. (laughter) He didn't take time to close the gate after he started through it. (laughter) He was standing right along there, and Tom was up on the porch next to the door. (move to Structure B-14)

Those brick are not the originals. There were two fireplaces on this end of the house, a fireplace in each room when I was boarding here with Frances and Charlie Rhea. I believe that Henry Thompson and I slept in this southwest room here. The kitchen was further back at the time. The house has been reworked. The last time I saw this house--until Sunday--the front porch, the whole thing was in bad repair. This has been done in the last few years. You can look at the paint and tell that. You can see that post is made out of plywood. Part of that other post over there is made out of plywood. That one there is original.

LA: You mean the one on the south corner of the porch?

JH: Yeah, most of that one on the north end is original.

LA: How many fireplaces were on the north side, just one?

JH: If I remember right, just one over there. They have redone the wall and it doesn't even show that up. They've done away with most of the old original brick from the fireplaces, and you just find pieces around here. You see, this is the original brick. See, this is not even. Those brick do not even start to compare with the original stuff. In other words, the way they've gone about fixing it up, he's done more damage in my opinion. He's done more damage to the house than he's helped it. In my opinion, the way the thing looks he's halfway tried to modernize the thing, and you just don't very well modernize.

LA: This is part of the chimney fall that we uncovered.

JH: I was just looking. That's not what I was looking for. At the top of every fireplace inside, they would have two iron bars, to hold the brick above the front of the fireplace so they could carry a chimney on up. I thought that piece of iron might have been one of them. The best I remember this, we had a fireplace here on the southeast room and one over there at the southwest room. Now, wait a minute. I could be pretty bad wrong on two chimneys on this end. It's possible that pile of brick there . . . that chimney there could have fallen over this way. Let's go over here and



I'll show you something. You have to have a place where they had to build up under the house for the hearth.

LA: Okay, there is a cutout place in the floor.

JH: Yes, we got it. Yeah, come here. Here it is, Jim. Crawl under here, and I'll show it to you. Here's where they filled in. Come on young lady; you can see it too. Those plank don't match anything back here. These here are running a different way. Here's your second fireplace. Alright, and when we go around to the north end, we'll crawl up under there and see what we can locate.

JM: Alright.

JH: Here's one of the old timbers that came out from here. Y'all should take that in with you. Look Jim, they didn't nail this timber. This was the corner brace in this house somewhere. This went up into a corner post, and it's mortised into that corner post. Then a peg went through a hole in that corner post through this hole and held it pinned together. You might near didn't tear these houses down for this reason. In this timber, in the post that this brace fitted into, they didn't bore the hole all the way through the post. They called that "blind pegging." You could take all the siding off, but you didn't have anyway to get back over here and drive that wooden peg back. You had to tear it out. You should take this in.

LA: We will eventually.

JH: Now, that was Dr. Uithoven's orchard part back down in there.

JM: That's to the south of the house?

JH: Yes, that's to the south.

LA: What were the property boundaries when you lived here?

JH: How do you mean, the whole place?

LA: The extent of the yard and the property that he owned.

JH: Well, that pear tree there is to the outside of the yard, and I believe that at the time that Doc first moved up here, he had a paling or picket fence. Do you know what I'm talking about?

LA: Kind of, I think.

JH: You go to the woods, find you a big oak or a big pine or a cypress that will split pieces off straight. They would cut those into anywhere from two or seven foot lengths. Then they would take wedges and a sledge hammer and a wooden glut.

JM: A wooden what?

JH: A wooden glut. It's a wedge made out of wood; we called them gluts.

JM: Oh, I see.

JH: You split the log. After you split it, you quartered it, went to splitting it down to quarters. Then you split the heart out. The splits would be in a V-shape, from nothing to maybe six inches wide. You would split the heart out to where you could get a four-inch paling off the side. The sap on oak doesn't hold up well; it doesn't hold up well on cypress. You would split that off and throw it away. Then you would go to riving off your palings, about a half-an-inch thick. If you have good timber, if you know how to handle that froe and mash and how to bend those pieces, they'd drive out alright. In other words, you take a piece about six inches thick and you would half it. Then you would half that so you'd have two pieces, three inches thick. Then you would half one of those. You'd keep halving until you would split out two palings at one time.

JM: Did Doc ever keep anything under this house?

JH: Well, I don't remember, Jim.

JM: Was there any lattice work underneath, between the pillars?

JH: I don't remember; I know there was lattice work on the back, at one time.

LA: Do you mean on the ell coming off the back of the house?

JH: On the ell coming off the back of the house back here.

LA: Do you remember what the ell was sitting on? Was it on wooden piers, or was it on brick piers?

JH: It was on brick piers. All of this has been redone. Did you notice that stump that's been cut out from under the front porch over there on this corner?

LA: Yes.

JH: Well, you see, the thing got in bad repair. You have an idea how many years it went for a sapling that large to grow up.

LA: Was there anything built up the house on the southeast corner?

JH: Not that I remember, not down here. But the ell came off from the northeast end and the kitchen went out there. You're digging where the kitchen sat, I believe. It went right near to that utility room and shed, and they may have used that later on in Doc's time for a smokehouse.

LA: Was it just a shed when you lived here?

JH: Yes. Of course, it wasn't in that bad of repair at that time. I think that you are digging up the original smokehouse.

LA: By that cedar tree?

JH: Yes, out there. They, as a rule, would try to have the smokehouses far enough away from the main house, so that if the smokehouse caught on fire while they were smoking meat and burned down, it wouldn't burn the main house at night.

LA: Over here by the shed, we're finding brick piers that have been collapsed, running in a line away from the shed. Do you remember any other outbuildings right there?

JH: No, but you haven't dug any brick up from where the back porch would run out towards the smokehouse, have you?

LA: No, we haven't.

JH: Sometimes the people would put down a brick walkway to their outbuildings, smokehouses, and so forth. That's a piece out of an old striking clock.

LA: Yes, we found a couple of those.

JH: It looks like it's off an old striking clock. I don't believe that these little, as one fellow says, "tick-tocks" had gears in them that large.

LA: We've also found a fence line that's fallen down, and it's running this way.

JH: A wire fence?

LA: Yes. It runs that way all along the south wall of the units. Was there a pen for animals?

JH: That could have been a chicken yard there. Wait a minute now. At one time I was here, and I believe Doc had a bunch of little lambs and stuff. That may have been where he would pen lambs and kids to look after them.

JM: Did he have a barn up here?

JH: If I remember right, he had a shed for his stuff set back on that hill, on the other side of the well. It's been so long between the time that Doc was able to get around and look after things and when I stayed here with Frances and Charlie Rhea. I could be confused about that. I don't think it was back up where Charlie Rhea built; I don't think it was up there, although, there is a possibility.

That's a bottom out of an old churn. Oh boy, sometimes it would take that old butter so long to come. Baby, did you ever beat the butter out of clabber? (addresses Lilly Hendrix)

LH: Yes.

JH: Well, did you ever beat the butter out of sweet milk?

LH: Never.

JH: Now, that's when butter's good.

LH: Yeah, but it's hard to churn, unless it's a real stiff heavy cream. Then it isn't too hard.

JM: What do we have here?

JH: Now, that kitchen had to come off from here. Now hell, that don't belong on that house--I mean excuse the expression. (refers to modern siding) If I remember right, there was a lattice porch that came off of this ell along here. Now, you had a set of back steps here, and I can't ever remember any brick steps being here.

LA: Were they wooden steps?

JH: I'm quite sure that if they were brick, there would be more showing than that. You were talking about mortar. Let's go hunt up some of this stuff. Here's some of your mortar, now. Okay now, this is not oyster shells. This mortar from the southeast chimney is mixed from sand and lime. They used to find a good place, where you'd have dirt that was nothing much but sand, with very little clay in it. You dig it out. You bought your lime, back then, by the bushel. They'd sack it for you, or you could buy it by the barrel in practically any amount you wanted. In other words you would get a gallon, or a peck, or half-a-bushel, or a bushel, or a barrel. It came slacked or unslacked. Unslacked lime, when you put the water, man it would heat up and boil. If you got any of it on you, it would give you a bad burn. Slacked lime would already be slacked to a powder. You could mix it and make mortar.

JM: So, what is this mortar made of?

JH: This is made out of lime and mortar. You'll see that some of this lime didn't dissolve and mix. He never kept mixing, and you got a little speck or two. It's sand and lime. If you look around those joints and pillars at Waverly mansion, it's got oyster shells in it. Robert Snow can give you the history of using oyster shells; I think that, at the time, they didn't have lime as plentiful as they do now. They crushed oyster shells for lime.

I believe this is where the original smokehouse would have been. It's just about far enough away from the house. This is probably the foundation, and you see it had a dirt floor. They tried to build

smokehouses as much varmit proof, rat proof, as they could. There is a good possibility that this foundation may have come up as much as knee-high, and then the building fastened onto that with maybe one or two steps to come up and one or two steps to go down to the floor. If this was built before the Civil War, during the Civil War this floor was probably dug up and boiled so the people could get salt. Yes sir, my dad remembers when his daddy was off in the Confederate army and nobody had any salt. They would go to the smokehouse and dig up the floor. That's where they salted the meat and everything. They'd drop a little salt and it would get into the ground. They would dig up the floor, boil it, drain the water off, strain it, and then evaporate that water down to the salt. That's the same basic method for making sugar, cooking molasses down, evaporating it until it cooks down to where it was rock candy. Then they beat it up for sugar. Let's go to the north end of that foundation and look.

LA: Can I ask you one more question? In the southeast corner of the yard, there's a circular depression.

JH: This?

LA: Right. Is there a possibility of a privy or another well out in this corner of the yard? Do you remember any?

JH: That looks like it's been dug. Somebody's been digging around here years ago. That's what that looks like. Now, you said something about a dug well up here lined with brick. Which way is it?

LA: Right. It's on the north side of that big oak tree.

JH: That's mussel shell. Doc was a big hand, in the wintertime, to order oysters in the shell. If you find any oyster shells laying around, you'll know that he ordered them.

That is a pear tree and a peach tree. There may be a few apple trees mixed back in there around, too. Back then, people out in the country pretty well lived on what they raised or raised most of what they ate. There wasn't any running to town everyday, or every other day, and buying a handful of this and that or another like we do now. Heck, you didn't have welfare and relief and so forth.

LA: This is a brick-lined well that is all covered over.

JH: That's the first time I've ever seen this well. I've heard them talk about having to be careful. Have any old timbers fallen down in there?

LA: I don't know. It is quite open for about three meters.

JH: Well, I've heard them say something about a well that they had to keep covered up around here to keep the kids from falling in.

JM: Didn't you tell me that you thought the height of this house had been cut down?

JH: I think, the best I remember, that it's cut down. I don't think that I'm confusing this with the story-and-a-half or two-story log house that Doc lived in at the ferry. You see how that roof has been redone up there, sloped up?

LA: Yes.

JH: Now I can be plenty mistaken, but it seems like there were 12'x 18' rooms upstairs. Have you been inside yet?

LA: Yes, I have.

JH: Is there any sign of a stairway on the wall?

LA: Not that I've noticed. The ceiling is almost totally gone inside.

JH: Here's where a fireplace has been here on the northeast end. Well, I didn't think I was wrong about this. Let me just take a check on this other. We had a fireplace on this northwest corner, too. Man, I mean they've torn the brick down and haven't left much of any sign whatever of fireplaces or foundations for it. Let's walk in and take a little look if you don't mind. (pause)

JM: We're inside Cedar Oaks.

JH: Baby, watch it. This foundation in here could be bad. We haven't got a flashlight, have we?

JM: No.

JH: Well, this other part is what looks to me like has been lowered. Oh, I'm trying to. . . . Maybe this is just a one-story house and I'm just confused on this and the old log house down at the ferry landing that Doctor used to live in.

JM: Was this house plastered when you lived here?

JH: Yeah, it was plastered and papered over, I believe. See, this was the dogtrot here, and it's been fenced in in later years.

LA: Was it open when you lived here?

JH: No, it wasn't open but I've heard other people talk about it. Doc, I believe, was the one who when he moved up here, said there was too much cold wind blowing through it and closed it up, put windows in the east side of it. I think there was supposed to be windows back there on the side.

(location east of Structure B-17) This looks like it was a little levy drawn up here for a pool, to hold a little water back. It's

finally filled up. You can see the old rows where they have raised crops down in the bottom where the dirt's washed off these hills.

JM: They put up a levy here? Why would they do that?

JH: They may have had hogs back in here and needed a little pool for the hogs to wallow. That's a possibility. Later on this filled in and you can see those old rows there where it has been cultivated. (move to the first ridge east of Structure B-17)

JM: What kind of metal do we have here?

JH: That's part of an old car body. Of what, I don't know. When they'd junk one and tear it up to get rid of it, they couldn't sell the light metal. (move south on ridge) Huckleberries are in bloom, Baby. Look at them. Look over here through these pine saplings around here, and you'll see the old rows.

JM: In the garden?

JH: Yeah. Now I'll tell you what done that there--hog rooting. Hogs rooted that up to get nut grass in the wintertime, that's what that is. You'll see a lot of those depressions. Up until the last few years after the people got the crops gathered, they turned all the stock out and let them run loose to clean up the fields. They didn't put the hogs up until about the middle of March. Well, after everything was cleaned up, all the nuts and the acorns and so forth, then the hogs went to wherever they could find nut grass and rooted those nuts out.

JM: What is nut grass?

JH: If you ever own a place, you don't want to get it started. I'll say that. It's a narrow leaf grass, and it propagates by nuts under the ground and by seeds on top of the ground. Yes, sir. Look here, Jim. There's where they plowed and threw the dirt up. That was the row and that was the middle of the furrow, whatever you people up north call it. Back in the first part of the 1930s, if I remember right, the Uithovens worked this in corn.

JM: Do you remember what this fence was? (at Structure B-11)

JH: There was, more than likely, a fence running east and west here. This used to be a pasture over here on the south side of the place.

JM: The Uithoven's pasture?

JH: Yes, that was the Uithoven's pasture. This ridge running here, looks like it might have had a fence here and a yard over there, and they used to keep the grass down in the yard. The only way to keep the grass down was to take hoes and hoe the yard clean. Then they'd pick it up, as a general rule, and throw it over the fence. This ridge looks like where they kept throwing the grass and passing the dirt over the fence and built up a ridge here.

LH: The flowers are back over this way.

JH: I think the house sat back out here, Baby. I'm not sure, but it was somewhere in here on this ridge.

SM: There's a large chimney fall south of here.

JH: Did we go down there, Jim, to that?

JM: No, we didn't.

SM: But we've also found quite a lot of material in the pits and a lot of brick like up here.

JH: The last I saw of a building on this ridge, it was being used for a dwelling. I understood that at one time, this house was used for a school building.

JM: What kind of a chimney did it have in it?

JH: It had a chimney in the center. It looked to me like a flue built up for a heater.

JM: Red brick?

JH: It was brick. You may find a few old brick around in here. Now, let's walk down to the other place. (move south to Structure B-12) Well, the brick would mount up. There is a possibility that this is what I'm thinking about, but I'm still thinking about something further back north.

SM: From the excavation, it looks like there was another chimney to the east.

JH: I still want to think about remembering the schoolhouse being back further north with just a flue in it for a heater. I can't reconcile that pile of brick with the house that I remember. It is a good possibility that this is the place. If it is, the last time I was here, Henry Richards and his family lived in it. We sort of passed by on the path when we came down to work. You see it was just about a mile from up here at the old Uithoven house down to where I worked. At seventeen-cents-a-gallon gas, I wasn't going to worry about burning gas to go way all the way around when I could walk down there and get there in about the same time. It is possible that this could be the old house site that I'm thinking about. I was told, at one time, that it was used for a school.

JM: But, you don't think that this is the house because it's so far off the path and the chimney is so big?

JH: It seems like it's a little bit farther south than what I remember. It seems like the chimney fall is too large for what I'm thinking about. You're going to find the road for whatever was up here came



in from the south, and I think it was on the west side of the ridge. That may be it coming in right down there. Now, there's a big cedar that somebody has cut down for post, and there's another old big cedar that's dead. This could be the place. I could be confused, Jim. It may have another chimney here.

SM: Did they have one on each end?

JH: It's a good possibility.

JM: But this wouldn't be the schoolhouse site?

JH: No, I don't think for the house I'm thinking of. If I remember right, it was setting longways north and south, and you see, this is might near sitting east and west. (return to Structure B-11)

JM: You say Henry Richards lived here?

JH: They live somewhere in Virginia now. You want to talk to his brother-in-law, Athan Duke. He was raised up around Vinton, and he works for B. Bryan farms.

JM: At this schoolhouse, did the people own the land or was this leased from somebody else?

JH: Out here in the country, most of the time the way those schools were set up was when the community would need a school, somebody would donate an acre of land for the school. It would be drawn up in the title that if the county ever abandoned the school, the ground and building and all went back to the estate.

JM: Whose estate would this land have been in?

JH: Well, that would have gone back to the estate that Doctor Uithoven bought from. See, I don't know who Doc bought this land from. People talk about the old Coltrane place in here. Let's see, the Andrews lived in here. Miss Bessie Andrews married William Bradley Andrews; she's the one that's in the hospital.

JM: Well, Stephen do you have any questions about the site?

SM: He said that there was a structure here going north and south?

JH: If I remember, this structure sat north and south. Henry Perkins and his family lived here in the mid-1930s, I know.

JM: And where did they go to?

JH: West Point. Henry and his wife are dead. I don't know where the children went. Nancy Keller is the one that married Sandiford. They lived on the place here somewhere. That was back in late 19-teens and early 1920s.

JM: They lived here on the site?

JH: On the place somewhere, in some of the houses. I don't know which one. After Henry Perkins and his wife lived here, I think Richards was the next to live here. After Richards moved out, I don't know who moved in. I tell you what you do. You get ahold of Mrs. Cory Taylor. Henry Richards married her sister. Cory is listed in the West Point phone book. You'll notice, coming out Highway 50, the Pentecostal church that is on the north side of the road coming out. I believe hers is about the third driveway on the right. The house sits just off of the south side of Highway 50.

JM: Now, her sister was married to the man who lived in this house?

JH: Yes, and they were living here. Henry worked on the barge down at the gravel pit when we were pumping the gravel. He kept the fuel tanks and the fuel for the diesel engines that pulled the pumps on the barges, and he kept the water bailed out of the barges. I ran the water pump that sat over on the riverbank, pumping water and running water back into the gravel pit for them to wash gravel with.

You also want to interview Athan Duke. He was raised in this community.

JM: Mr. A. E. Duke?

JH: Yes, Athan Duke. He lives north of the feed mill on Bryan farms. (move to Vinton)

JM: We're at Vinton. Dean, where are we standing?

DA: We're standing on the southern road that leads into the site. We're just to the east and a little south of the Watson camphouse, just above the river. (pause) Do you know anything about all the brick in the road?

JH: Well, they've thrown that in here to fill in so they could get in and out. That's not any of the original. (pause) I was thinking the cotton slide was a little further south than what this camphouse is. Let's go down here and look--I haven't been here to this camphouse since mid-1930s.

DA: My understanding was that down just below the camphouse here, there's a flat low area that they refer to as the Vinton landing.

JH: Well, it could have been. Old man Van Howard made a recording of this for the West Point Centennial in 1958, before he died. Have y'all contacted radio station WROB for that?

JM: Who do we contact?

JH: Contact radio station WROB here at West Point, either Jack King or Jack Dalton.

JM: Did Mr. Howard talk about the landing down here?

JH: Well, I've fished the river here but I was thinking that the landing was a little further to the south. By the way, where is the overflowing well here? There's an artesian well here, somewhere. Oh, it's down to a pump now. I see it. Alright, that used to be an artesian well, about eighty-five feet deep. Do you take in another camphouse up here just across from the mouth of Buttahatchie?

DA: Yes.

JM: Whose house was that?

JH: A fellow named Clark owned that the last time I heard of it. I don't know who owns it now.

JM: Who owned it before him?

JH: Originally, the Watson's built it back in the mid-1920s. They named it "Linger Longer." (pause)

DA: This is the area we refer to as the landing. You can barely see it from here, but there is a little bit of an access road coming down.

JH: Well, alright.

DA: They claim that they slid cotton here somewhere, and I always sort of thought that it might have been right here to the east of the camphouse.

JH: Well, there's that big ditch coming in from up in the hills.

DA: Yes, that's Millstone Creek.

JH: Okay. Let's look down south a little farther. The slide was farther down, and you see, this river has been allowed to fill up with snags and stuff. Boats were able to travel it, push barges when the water was at that stage out there. If old man Howard was right, the cotton slide was a hundred yards or so below Millstone Creek.

JM: What did the slide look like?

JH: I never did see it.

JM: Did he give a description of it?

JH: Yeah, it was made out of something like a two-inch thick lumber--we may be getting close to it--but the slide was made just as wide as a bale of cotton.

JM: Which would be how wide?

JH: Oh, I would say it would be approximately five feet wide. They loaded that bale of cotton on the slide sideways, and they would attach ropes to one of the ties on the bale of the cotton. They would put the bale on that slide and let it down by hand. The idea of the rope on it was to keep it from sliding down too fast and breaking the barge deck or the boat deck or whatever it hit. Back then, those barges and the decking on those boats were made out of wood. You figure a five hundred to five hundred and fifty or six hundred-pound bale of cotton sliding down an incline like this, by the time it would get down about a hundred feet, it would probably be traveling fifty miles an hour, and that's some force.

This is another gully coming through here, and they used this for a boat landing. Somebody got their steps over there. But your cotton slide has got to be north of this ditch somewhere back up to the. . . .

DA: That's the area right in front of the screened-in porch with the brick floor.

JH: Well, contact Jack Dalton or Jack King at WROB radio station, and they've got those tapes.

JM: Okay.

DA: Associated with this cotton slide up here, I've heard that there was a warehouse somewhere in the area. Have you ever heard of a warehouse being down in that same area near where that camphouse is now?

JH: No, I thought the warehouse was back up close to the old post office, the store up there.

JM: Were there ever any remains of that building when you were coming up?

JH: Not that I know of.

JM: Joe Harris didn't talk about it much?

JH: No, but he did talk about those down there just below Barton Ferry landing.

JM: He said that there were two of them below Barton Ferry landing?

JH: That's what Uncle Joe said.

JM: Any more questions here, Dean?

DA: No, I don't think so.

JM: What do you know about this old camphouse?

JH: I've been down here two or three times when they were having a fish fry, is all. Most of them would have a fish fry and a drinking party and some fun.

JM: Did you provide the fish or the fun?

JH: No, the other fellows provided that. Didn't anybody get out of the way, they just had a good time. Well, I reckon, we better ease back up on the hill.

JM: Let's let these people get to their supper.

JH: Well, I'm not too particular hungry.

JM: Well, I want to thank you for the interview today, anyway. I know you've walked a good many miles here.

JH: Well, I've got to do some walking and so forth.

M: This is an interview with Mr. James "Honeybee" Hendrix for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place in Mr. Hendrix's home. His address is Route 2, Box 416, West Point, Mississippi 39773. Mr. Hendrix's telephone number is 494-7271. The date is June 21, 1980.

Mr. Hendrix you were going to tell me something about farming out at Vinton?

H: Well, this is to give you an idea of how the farmers used to gather the crops in the fall of the year. The main cash crop was cotton. The rule was to save one bale of cotton back in the fall of the year, if possible, and wait until February or March of the following year to sell it. That way they would have money to make another crop on. They had to have money to buy the staple groceries that they needed such as flour, sugar, and coffee. Most of them had their own corn for their meal; most of them had canned goods in the pantry, and they generally had an ample supply of meat hanging in the smokehouse. A bale of cotton probably wouldn't bring more than fifty dollars, but back there at the turn of the century, that was quite a sum of money. It would buy a lot more then than it does now. This is also about a murder that was committed in Monroe County, about old man Jim Ed McGraw.

When I was a small kid, Mrs. Zillie McGraw helped raise me. She often told about her husband's death. One February, he had taken a bale of cotton to Aberdeen and sold it to get money so that they could have money to make the next crop on. It was late that night when he was returning from Aberdeen with some of the groceries and what was left of the money from the sale of the bale of cotton. I believe that Mrs. McGraw said her husband was killed along by where Bethel Church is, and he was robbed. I don't remember who she said came along that night and found the team and wagon in the road with her husband's body laying down in the road by the side of the wagon. That happened, I believe, just about the turn of the century. It was customary, though, for most of the farmers to hold back a bale of cotton and sell it during the last of the winter or the early part of the following spring to get the next years supply of money to make the crops on.

M: What was Jim Ed McGraw's father's name?

H: It was Jim Ed McGraw, same as the old man Jim Ed McGraw who was living in the nursing home and was buried a few weeks ago.

M: What was Mrs. McGraw's maiden name?

H: Mrs. McGraw's given name was Zillie Gibson. I believe that was spelled Z-I-L-L-I-E.

M: Was that another family from the area?

H: No, that's the same bunch of McGraws that you have heard about up around Vinton all of the time.

M: I see.

H: At one time, they lived on the old Binford place which is about a quarter of a mile west of the old Vinton schoolhouse site, on the north side of the road. I believe it joined the McGraw and the Van Howard place on the north side. I believe there was about a section of land in the Binford place, at one time.

M: Could you tell me about the road that you call the Whites Station Road?

H: Well, the road from Monroe County line back to the Vinton schoolhouse used to, when I was a small kid, come straight south from Monroe County line and intersect at the Whites Station/Vinton/Barton Ferry Road, approximately three hundred yards west of the Vinton schoolhouse site. Sometimes in the mid-1920s, the supervisor of the district, Bill Crosby, changed the road to the present site, going slightly northwest from the Vinton schoolhouse site for approximately a mile and intersecting at the old Vinton/Darracott/Aberdeen Road and then going due north to the Monroe County line.

M: Do you know why he changed that?

H: The only reason that they gave for a change in that was so people going from Aberdeen or going from Barton Ferry area to Aberdeen wouldn't have to make a turn there at the Vinton schoolhouse, go three hundred yards back west, and then make another turn. He said it would cut off three hundred yards in the traveling to the Monroe County line.

M: That was a lot of work for three hundred yards.

H: Yes, that was a lot of work, but that's what he did.

M: There are a couple of houses along that road in the section where it was altered. Do you remember an old house on the site where Ed Sanders used to live?

H: Yes. That was a log house with a dogtrot. It was, I understand, the old Brooks place. I believe that all of the Brooks have died out in this community. Let's see, one of the girls married Homer Duke. Shoot, I'm trying to think of that woman's name. She hasn't been dead but just a few years. Do you know Athan Duke? His mother was a Brooks. I believe that it was Athan Duke's mother who was a Brooks. I believe there was one Brooks boy. I think he just plumb picked up and left this part of the country to where he could find regular work. I don't know where he went.

About a hundred yards west of the Brooks house, was the McGraw place. From what I remember of that house, it was a four-room frame

building with a porch on the east side. That house has been torn down years ago. From the Brooks home back south to where the road intersected the White Station/Vinton/Barton Ferry Road, I don't remember another building. On the same road, just south of the Monroe County line and on the west side of the road, was the Gibson place. My recollection of that house is that it was built in an ell shape. I believe that it had three rooms to the front and two rooms to the ell. The kitchen and dining room was on the ell going back west. The front porch was on the east, facing the road, and the back porch was on the south side of the house. I remember a paling fence around the house when I was a kid. The Tobe Wilson family also lived there at one time.

M: In the same house?

H: Yes, in the same house. I believe that the family eventually moved back to the old log house on the Tobe Wilson place, and that's where old man Tobe died.

M: Has that house been moved?

H: Which house?

M: The old log house.

H: No. I guess there are parts of that old house still up there. It's pretty well rotted down by now. The last time I saw the house was probably in the late 1940s, and I believe that most of the roof had rotted off and fallen in. I imagine that the house has rotted down and grown up in bushes and briers.

M: Was that the house that Lee Alton Duke was born in?

H: I don't know. Now the Ab Duke place was just south of the Monroe County line, laying east of the Darracott/Vinton Road. I've forgotten how many acres they had. To the best of my recollection, that was a frame house and was built on an ell-shape. It had four rooms to the front and the kitchen, and dining room was built on the ell at the north part of the house, running back east. The Ab Duke house had a front porch on the west side, and the back porch was on the ell, on the south side of the ell.

M: Did you know Mr. Ab Duke?

H: Yes, I knew him. Early Duke was Ab's brother. Early and Carlos Duke lived about a mile north of the Clay County/Monroe County line on the Vinton/Darracott Road. Part of the old log house that Early and Carlos Duke were born in is standing.

M: Did Ab Duke ever say when the frame house that he lived in was built?

H: No. Ab Duke never was a talkative man, that I know. He farmed back in there and so forth. Some of them said they made whiskey back in



there. I was a small kid; I wouldn't know too much about it. I don't remember if Ab Duke and his wife were still living out there when they died or not, but I'm someway under the impression that they had moved to West Point so it would be a little more convenient for them. They were way up in age. I believe there were three girls and two boys in the Ab Duke family.

M: Do you remember Mr. William Duke?

H: I don't believe that I do. Well, listen have you found any of the Wrights that used to live around Vinton Community?

M: No.

H: Joe Wright, I believe, is living at Pheba. He and I are about the same age. I think Arthur, Sid, and Will Wright are living in Columbus. Mary Wright married Woodrow "Woody" Holliday.

M: Have you ever heard of the Clay family?

H: The name is familiar and there are quite a few Clays in West Point. They were raised in West Point, but where they originally came from, I don't know. There were also some Clays, years ago, in Monroe County up north of Strongs Station. Whether they were raised up there or where they came from, I don't know. I think there was an Oliver Clay, and he had a brother who was a doctor. His brother finished medical school and moved from Monroe County to Tutwiler. The last I saw of him was in 1929 when he was practicing. Oliver Clay moved to Grenada, I believe. That's the last I heard of him. I believe that he was in the insurance business. Clays around Barton Ferry or Vinton community just do not ring a bell with me. I don't remember any of the Wilsons, Dukes, or Andrews, McGraws, ever mentioning the Clays. That had to be way before some of those people's time.

M: Had anybody ever told you about a gristmill and possibly a small store standing where A. C. Sanders's house is now?

H: Well, I don't know. Now, at one time, I don't remember if it was in the late 1930s or during the 1940s, there were some houses along in there. A gristmill just doesn't ring a bell with me. By the way, do you have anything on some Fosters living around in the Vinton community back in the 1930s and 1940s. There were two brothers and their families living up in there. I'm thinking that there was a house that one of the Fosters lived in about where A. C. Sanders is living now. I don't know which one. Well, now there's another family that used to live up there during the 1930s and 1940s. I'm trying to think of their names. One of the boys, I'm told, was subject to having epileptic fits. He had gone up the road about halfway between Vinton schoolhouse site and Whites Station and had climbed a pecan tree to gather pecans. A seizure hit him, he fell out of the tree, and broke his neck. They didn't find him until the next day. I can't remember that family's name, but they lived up in the Vinton community up there.

M: Do you remember where the Trotters lived?

H: No, I don't. No, sir.

M: Had you ever heard of a Mr. Miller?

H: Yes. The name is familiar but I don't know. It has been so long ago that I don't remember where he lived up there.

M: I see. Have you ever heard of a place called the Whaley house at Barton?

H: No, I haven't.

M: We were told that David Keller had once built a house at Barton.

H: Well, I thought that David had at one time built a house on some of the land that Dr. Uithoven owned. I thought that it was towards the west side of the Uithoven holdings, out toward the Ed Wilson house. David married Mary Lou Thompson from Strong Station. If I remember the house that David Keller built, it was back next to the house where Ed Wilson owned.

M: Would that be east from the house?

H: No. That would be west from the old house on Doc's place, Cedar Oaks as y'all have named that place.

M: Would it be behind the Ed Wilson house?

H: It would be east of the Ed Wilson house, yes. There used to be an old road that came through the Uithoven place, and it was the original stagecoach road from Barton Ferry to Vinton and Aberdeen. David, to the best of my recollection, had built his house to the side of that old road. In other words, it was just what we would call a "field road." It is the same road that I lived on when I worked in the gravel pits.

M: I see. Did Joe Harris ever live in that house?

H: I don't know. He has lived around and about all over Barton Ferry and around Vinton community every since I can remember, until he moved out from up there and came down to Waverly, yes. Joe Harris may have lived in the house that David Keller built.

M: Did Woodrow Dobson's father ever live in that house?

H: That David Keller had built? I don't know. All Woodrow ever tells me about is his people living there in the house that used to be on the south side of the Barton Ferry Road, practically across from the Mather's place. You know where the gate comes in to the Uithoven's place, and you know there was a house place back in there. I believe that's where Woodrow told you he was born, isn't it?

M: Well, I believe he told me that he was born out by the Atkins house. Could you tell me a little more about that house place across from the iron gate.

H: I don't even remember a house being there. I know that there had been a house site. You could see the old flowers and crepe myrtles, but ever since I can remember being down to Barton Ferry, the house had been torn down or had burned down or something. I understood Woodrow to say that he was born in that house. He said that his daddy operated Barton Ferry around 1913, along in there. Now, whether they lived down in the old log house at the ferry landing any, I don't know; I never have. The Atkins and the Dobsons are related some way or another. I don't know exactly how they are related. It's possible that an Atkins married I think one of Woodrow's aunts on his father side. Woodrow has told me but I have forgotten exactly how that is.

M: Can you tell me what shape the chimneys on the house that we're calling Cedar Oaks were on the outside?

H: When I was a kid, years ago, the chimneys and fireplaces were in good repair. I believe that when I was boarding there in the fall of 1937 with Charlie Rhea and his wife Frances, who was an Uithoven before she married Charlie, those fireplaces and chimneys were still standing and were in good repair.

M: Could you tell me what they looked like? Were they straight all the way up?

H: On the outside, the chimneys were built up straight to above the fireplace on the inside of the house. For about seven feet, the chimneys were straight up. Then they were gradually brought in on each side, a half of brick at a time, to form the flue part of the chimney. Inside, the fireplace had a sloping back. From the bottom up to about even with the mantle board, the top sloped out so as to reflect the heat out onto the floor to warm it and then rise to warm the whole room. Most of the time, those chimneys would be straight up at the back, from the ground up. Then the front part of the top of the fireplace was sloped back to form a throat so that you wouldn't have too much draft sucking all of the heat up your chimney. About the best that you can get out of a fireplace is ten percent useful heat from the amount of fuel that you burn in them. Ninety percent of your energy goes up the chimney. All of the brick masons knew how to build fireplace throats to get as much heat as they could to come out into the room.

M: I see.

H: There were two chimneys, two fireplaces and chimneys on the south end of the old Uithoven house, and there were two fireplaces and chimneys on the north end.

M: Did they all look alike?

- H: Yes, sir. I think that at one time, the jams and the mantle in the northwest room of the old Uithoven house was marble and the rest of them were just plain brick. I might be confused with some other old house that had four fireplaces, but I believe that the fireplace in the northwest room had marble jams and mantle in that room.
- M: One more question about that place. Do you recall any outhouse besides the one that stands there now?
- H: It's been so long that I don't remember. The old smokehouse is still standing east of the house. It used to have an outside toilet, but I don't remember which way it sat. One hundred and fifty yards in front of the old Uithoven house, the Cedar Oaks as you people call it, were the barns, the stalls and sheds for the horses and cows and the storage of grain. I believe that the corncrib was over there in the barn lot.
- M: Do you recall a blacksmith shop or the remains of a blacksmith shop?
- H: No, I don't. It's been so long, but I don't remember a blacksmith shop being there close to the Uithoven house.
- M: Would there be a piece in a fireplace that is made of a long piece of flat steel that had hinges and other pieces coming down from each end?
- H: I don't remember.
- M: It looks sort of like the drawbar of a tractor except it has hinges at the joints.
- H: I wonder what it was used for.
- M: Me too.
- H: Now, there were a lot of those old fireplaces that had cranes built in them. A lot of people would hang a cook pot full of vegetables, a stew, or a roast, up by the bail on that crane, and swing it around over a bed of coals to cook so they didn't have to keep a fire going in the cookstove in the kitchen.
- M: Do you remember those ever being used at the Uithoven house?
- H: Naw, I don't remember them being used at the Uithoven house. I got one here that I am going to install in my fireplace here, when I get time. Yes, sir. Eyebolts will go here in the jam (points to fireplace) so the arm will swing out. Then you can hang your pot with your vegetables or whatever you want in it and swing it over your fire. I have seen several of those old houses, especially down where my father was raised around Philadelphia down there around the North Bend community, that had cranes. They are made so you can slip them out of those eyebolts and sit them out of the way when you don't want to use them.

M: There's one other question I wanted to ask you. It seems that at one time, Henry Watson had sharecroppers' houses all up and down his property.

H: Yes, they did. I guess that the Strong family were the last sharecroppers on the place. Maude Strong also ended up taking care of Julian Watson. I know that Maude sharecropped on the place, and she raised three boys or four. I used to know all of them. I believe they all went to St. Louis. I think it is Major that owns and operates a bakery in St. Louis. The youngest one, I believe, was called Julius. There was one called Samson. I can't think of his name, but I believe there was another boy. But anyway, after they grew up and went north, Maude continued to sharecrop with little Henry Watson on the place.

M: Where was her house?

H: Her house was on the very west side of the Watson land; it was way over on the west side of Dry Creek. Now, there was a road that went straight south off of the Whites Station/Vinton Road at the Schrock's place. The community pretty well used it and it came out down there on the West Point/Barton Ferry Road, about where J. B. East lives. There were one or two other small property owners there on the north side of the West Point/Barton Ferry Road. They also used that road, but it was, I guess, an agreement that people could pass through other people's property to get in and out to their places. Nothing was ever thought about it. In other words, they didn't try to put the pressure on somebody to make them sell their land to them or make them buy a right-of-way through their place like they do now. If you had land behind somebody else, why it wasn't any trouble for you to get you a right-of-way to get in and out without a squabble. They didn't worry about it. Back then, we were all neighbors, white and black. We were all poor and we had to get along, work with each other, and be neighbors with each other to exist.

Back then, everybody might near lived at home. They went to town to buy a little flour or coffee or sugar, maybe a little meat. Might near everything was raised out on the farm. You bought your clothes, and I can also just remember seeing some of them old people with spinning wheels, spinning thread to crochet with. I remember an aunt of mine in Philadelphia spinning the thread and then weaving the cloth to make Uncle George a suit.

M: Were there any people out at Vinton or that area who weaved when you were living out there?

H: No, but I'm trying to think. There used to be an old colored woman who lived around in there that used to have a spinning wheel. I have seen her spin thread; I also remember getting her to spin me a piece of twine about ten foot long for a fishing line and it was good.

M: Do you remember a woman named America Thomas?

H: Thomas, no, that just doesn't ring a bell up in there. I remember, five families of Wilsons who lived around in the Vinton community and the Dukes, the Brooks, McGraws, the Gibsons, Uithovens, Harrises, Atkins, the Andrews and the Whatleys. The Ellises lived west of Barton Ferry, Andy and Zack Ellis. Those were the original families that I knew when I was nine or ten years old.

M: Which would have been about what year?

H: That would have been around 1919 or 1920. Those were the old families that were already there, you see.

M: Were there any black families there?

H: Well, not around in the Vinton community but Andy Ellis and old man Zack had tenants on their place up there on Dry Creek. They had one family of Hamptons and one family of Bananas. Bull Banana's widow lives over here about a mile from me. I believe that the Ellises had seven tenant families working their land.

M: I want to thank you for the information that you shared with me today.

H: Well, okay. I'll help you as much as I can, Jim. But I tell you, by George, that's been years and years and years ago. I want to get by and see some of those artifacts.

M: Well, any work day is fine.



Figure 1. Mrs. Rafe Whatley.



Figure 2. Miss Victoria Whatley.

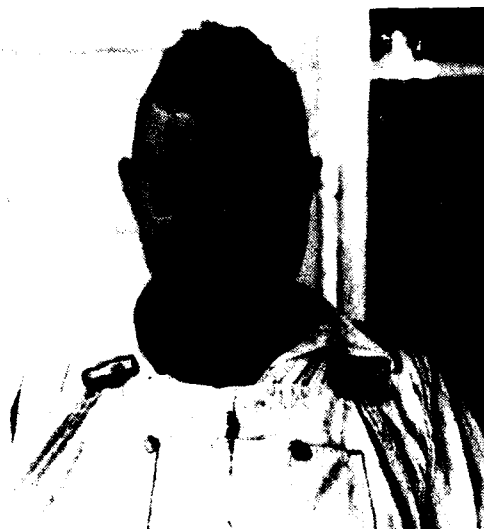


Figure 3. Bradley Andrews. Photos  
courtesy of A. E. Wilson.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 118  
An interview with  
Martin Gibb

conducted by  
Betty E. Mitson

edited by  
James M. McClurken



Martin Gibb was born in eastern Clay County, Mississippi on April 21, 1911. This interview is primarily biographical and gives information on the Gibb's family history. Also discussed are childbirth and midwifery, land inheritance, care of the elderly, and two eastern Clay County settlements of Upper Pool and Lower Pool.

The interview with Mr. Gibb was conducted at his place of business by Betty Mitson on February 6, 1980.



M: This is an interview with Martin B. Gibbs for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites by Betty Mitson. Mr. Gibbs's address is Route 2, Box 247, West Point, Mississippi 39773. His telephone number is 494-4358. I'm interviewing him at his place of business, The Wooden Rocker, in West Point.

Mr. Gibbs, first of all I want to ask you where you actually live?

G: I live in a little place called Stevens Switch, by the river down there.

M: Now, when you say the river you mean the Tombigbee?

G: Tombigbee.

M: And are you near to Tibbee Creek?

G: Well, Tibbee Creek is south of where I live at. It's maybe a mile or a little better. Yeah, the Tibbee Creek is where I live at. Now the place that we own is right on Tibbee Creek but I don't live on that place. It's a bunch of us that own the property in there, and there's one house on there. My Auntie lived there for a number of years. She had a man staying there with her; well, you may call it her husband. That was the only house that was on that place. So, that's where they was going to get in there on that Tombigbee Waterway.

M: Now, I'm not quite sure what you mean by "the place."

G: That's old man Henry Gibbs's place. That's my grandfather. He owned that place. I think it is around a hundred and eighty acres in there. He had children and he divided so much off for them, I think it's about seven acres apiece, but anyway, it's contained on the whole place. The farm is intact. After he died, you see, it fell to his children that were living. So now all of them done passed, and their share fell to the grandchildren. I don't know how many generations he left here. I mean of his grandchildren, and great-grands, and great-great-grandchildren. He got a chance to see some of them before he passed, he did.

M: Uh-huh.

G: He lived to get around--as I say that's what they give him, you know--a hundred and thirteen years old. And my grandmother, I think she lived to get about eighty; I believe it is or seventy-five or eighty. She passed way before he did so he remarried, but he was up in age then.

M: Do you remember about when he died?

G: He died, I think it was in 1941 or 1942, somewhere right in there.

M: And when were you born? What was your birthdate?

G: My birthday is April 21, 1911.

M: Where were you born?

G: I was born out there in Clay County on old man Henry Gibbs's place, my grandfather's place.

M: Your mother had you at home?

G: Yes, ma'am.

M: And that, I presume, was the custom at that time?

G: Yeah, then.

M: To have your children at home?

G: At home, at home.

M: Does that still happen sometimes?

G: Well, no ma'am, that's played out now. There used to be. . . . They called them midwives.

M: Were you delivered by a midwife.

G: By a midwife. Well, at that time all of the people around in there was delivered by a midwife.

M: You wouldn't know who that was, would you?

G: No ma'am, I've never knowed who it was. But I know from them that were under me. . . . The lady was named, Alice. I don't know if she was named Alice Melton or what, but I remember her coming to my mother. I was a good-sized little boy then.

M: Do you remember other children in your family being born?

G: She had nine of us in all, nine of us.

M: What would they do with you children when she was having a baby? Would you have to go to some other place to stay for awhile?

G: Well, yes. There was three children older than me. My oldest sister was old enough to know about the situation. We had, I think, two rooms to our house.

M: Would you be in the other room?

G: We'd be in the other room, yes ma'am.

- M: When you said that someone was under you, what did you mean?
- G: That means I was near about the middle kid. There were nine of us, and I'm the third child from the oldest one. There is four more under me.
- M: Does your property extend to the Tombigbee River?
- G: Yes, ma'am. The property belongs to all of the grandchildren, as I said. Ten grandchildren inherited all of it, and there are some up there on the homeplace. The other property that I'm talking about is right down there at Tibbee Creek.
- M: Now, when you say the homeplace, is that connected with your land or is that a separate place?
- G: Well, it's a separate place. I mean the homeplace, as we would call it, that's where they all was born.
- M: Is that where you were born?
- G: Yes, ma'am.
- M: Now, where would that be located?
- G: Well, that's right out east here, about five-and-a-half miles.
- M: From West Point?
- G: Up on Pools; up above Pools. This was Lower Pools on the Old Waverly Road.
- M: Was it called Pools?
- G: Well, now, the location where we lived at, I don't know if they called it Clisby. It was right over here, pretty close to where that community was, between Clisby and Pools. Clisby is where they would go to catch a train to come to town.
- M: Was that when you were just a little boy?
- G: I was a little boy when they used to stop down there. When I grewed on up and was a young man, it would come through but it wouldn't stop down there. It'd come on through to go on down to the Delta, down there at Greenville.
- M: But when you were little it would stop?
- G: Yes, ma'am. I was small when it used to stop there.
- M: At Clisby?
- G: At Clisby, yes ma'am. I was a small boy. I was in, I will say, my teens probably, in my teens. That's been quite awhile.

M: But when it stopped you were in your teens?

G: Yeah, I think I was in my teens.

M: This place where you were born was where your grandpa lived at that time?

G: Yes, ma'am. My grandpa owned that place. He bought that place and the lower place, too. They called it Staceys; that's what he called it. That's the one on the Tibbee down there, where it connected with that Tombigbee River.

M: Now when you say Staceys, is that where you are now?

G: No. I'm not on the place that the grandchildren own now. I'm on another place that me and my wife inherited through her old auntie.

M: Oh, so you're actually on a place that's not through your grandpa, but it's through your wife's side of the family?

G: That's right, my wife's side. Her auntie had got old; I think she got about ninety some years old. And some way she broke her arm, fell and broke her arm. She was by herself. Her husband passed so I would go down there some mornings and make her a fire, stay with her a little bit. One morning I went down there to make her a fire. It had snowed some. I called, I called, I called, I called and couldn't get nobody. I decided that she must have spent the night with somebody else. Finally, I heard something make a little tumble in the house, and she made it to the door. Then she opened one of the doors, but she didn't open the screen door. She started back and I told her, "You ain't opened this screen door." She came back and she opened it. Just as I went in, she went to fall, and when she went to fall, I caught her and put her in the bed. She said that she had fell and had been on the floor all that night. I got her and brought her over to the doctor. The doctor checked her. He said he didn't know whether she had a little stroke or not, but he said, "Don't let her stay by herself." So, I carried her home. She stayed with me and my wife. We took care of her, I think it was around four years before she assed. And so, she willed everything to us on account of we were the only ones that took care of her. I think when she died she was either ninety-two or ninety-three years old. Then we moved down on that place, and that's where we are at now.

M: Now, where did you move from?

G: Well, I moved from right below the homeplace. I'll say it ain't quite a half of a mile.

M: Now, is this the place you are talking about that's near Tibbee Creek, about a mile from Tibbee?

G: Well, this wasn't. This is the place I bought. The little place I

bought was about three acres. We left there and went down to Stevens Switch. That's where my wife's auntie lived at. After that fall, she stayed with us four years. She passed, we buried her, and moved down there. There was more room, you know, more land. From the homeplace to the lower place, which is Staceys, it was just about a mile going south, and then right at a corner of a seat was this corner there, and it went probably about a mile south. The whole place on Tibbee has got bends in it. It was right on Tibbee Creek. That's where this Tombigbee Waterway is coming in there. Now, it don't take all of our land, but it is going to get some of it. I think there is about three or four acres that they would get in there.

M: What are they going to use it for?

G: Well, that's the Tombigbee Waterway. See, it's coming up through there, you know, from Tombigbee down there--"the river" we call it, "Tombigbee River."--Well, they're coming all the way up, the way I can understand it, clean all the way back on up there. I don't know how far, but it's coming up there. See, the man said he was going to put a pool there and I think a dam. That water they collected is supposed to be in the pool. If it gets out of the pool, you see, then it's going to make a . . . Well, it's elevated kind of like this. The water comes up through there.

M: And it might come over on your land?

G: Yes, ma'am. It'll come up around the land. When it comes up there, it will cover that part and not be on one of ours.

M: I see.

G: And we got some land cut off in that creek. Well, I'm looking for the water, when they shut that gate and throw that water, to come right back up. I don't know how far, but it may come out of that ditch and go to spreading out across the land. We don't know how.

M: Do you expect to have a lease arrangement?

G: Yes, ma'am. That's what we said we was going to get, a release on it. We told them we wouldn't sell.

M: I want to go back and ask you about your grandpa again. What happened to the place that he lived in when you were born?

G: We still got that. Well, the place where I was born is still there, but it has been renewed and turned. The front used to be in the west when the nine of us were born. The door faced the west, but after we left there, my mother and father repaired it and turned the door to face kind of north on account of the highway coming right by it. It would be facing the highway.

M: The highway wasn't there then, I guess?

- G: Well, I don't think it was when they first built that house, but you know, I don't know when this house was built.
- M: Do you remember what the construction was like when you were little, before they changed it around? Was it a log house?
- G: No, ma'am. Well, they did have a log house there, but I don't remember when anybody stayed in there. I was a little bitty boy but I remember that it was connected to the house that I was born in. My mother and them had it for a kitchen. I remember they had two planks that we had to walk on to go down there to the kitchen. It was a log house but. . . .
- M: Had that been your grandpa's house before?
- G: No, that was my father's house. My grandfather's house had. . . . Well, I don't know. . . . It had one, two, three, maybe five or six rooms to it.
- M: Your grandfather's house?
- G: My grandfather's did and my grandmother. We, as little children, used to go up there, and we'd play around up there. Nearly about all the children around there would come to our house, and we'd go up there and play.
- M: Now, were those two houses fairly close together?
- G: Well, they were close. They were about as far apart. . . . My daddy's house, where I was born at, may have been about as far from my granddaddy's house. . . . Well, I would say it wasn't nowhere from it. It wouldn't take you five minutes to walk up there.
- M: It was all on the same piece of big property?
- G: Right. I think there were four houses on that place. We always called that the homeplace, his boys and his daughter. One of his daughters had a house on there, and three of his boys had houses on there.
- M: Now, this is the land you call Pools?
- G: This is called the homeplace. That's up above Pools. As I said, I don't know whether to call it Clisby or what, but the old generation, the old man, went to calling it Gibbs' Quarter. They call it Gibbs' Quarter.
- M: Is that what your grandpa called it?
- G: Well, that's what the people would call it, you know. They would say, "Fellow, where are you going?" "I'm going up here in Gibbs' Quarter."
- M: Oh, I see.

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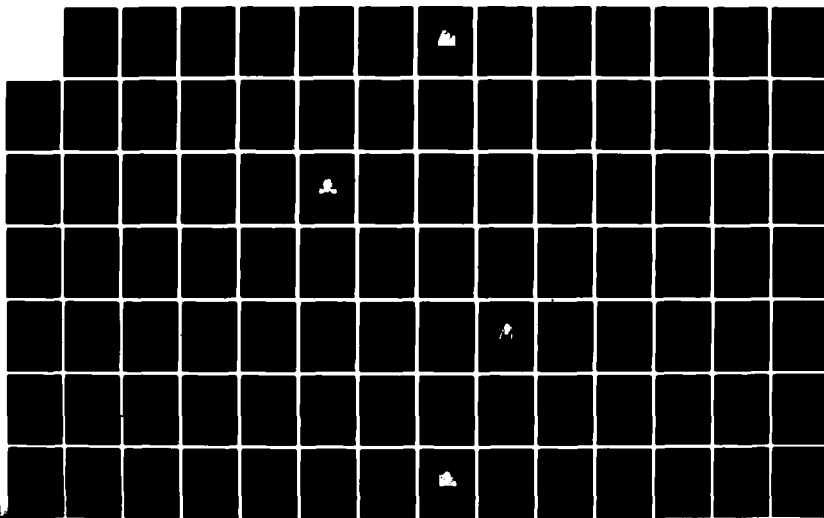
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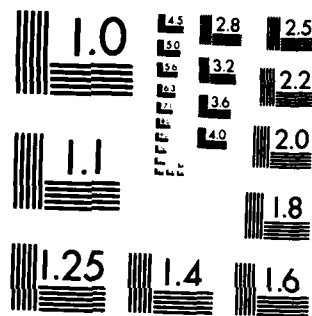
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G: They had a big ball diamond up there. They would all meet up there and play ball, the older heads and the younger heads, too.

M: Do you connect this name Pools with any man? Did you know any man by the name of Pool?

G: Well, I knowed a man named Pool alright enough, but that was none of him. This Pool was a white man. I never did know him, but I would hear my grandfather talk about him. This Pools down here they called Lower Pools. They had another one and they called it Upper Pools. I just heard them talk about that. It was nothing I knew; I didn't know him at all.

M: Do you know if Upper Pools had a plantation house on it?

G: You're talking about when my father, grandfather bought it or talking about. . . ?

M: No, I mean. . . . Now, was your grandfather on Upper Pools or Lower Pools?

G: Well, he was at about Lower Pools.

M: Okay. Now, what about Upper Pools? Was there a plantation there?

G: Well now, I imagine there was. I never did locate that, but I heard them talk about it all the time. That was up here at a place they called Strong Hill, back in there somewhere.

M: Oh.

G: But Pool owned both of them places, this white fellow named Pool. It was a plantation.

M: Now, would this be before your father's time?

G: Before my father's time?

M: When did Pool own it? Would it be before your father's time?

G: Well, I couldn't know whether it was before my father or what.

M: You don't know just when?

G: No, but my grandfather, old man Henry, I think he's the one that bought that land from the Pool man. I heard him say when he bought it, but I don't know when that is now. He wasn't just talking directly to me. They were talking, and I could remember a lot of things that they talked about concerning this land.

M: Now, that land was how many acres?

G: I think it's eighty acres on the homelace, and I think it's 180 or 161 on the lower place there.

M: That's the one down by the Tibbee?

G: Yes, ma'am.

M: Do you know if he had the lower place at the same time that he had the other?

G: I think, from the way I could understand it, that he bought the homeplace first then next he bought that lower place.

M: But that was probably before you were born, too?

G: I think that a lot of it was purchased before all of his children were born. I think he had around ten or eleven children; I think he was the father of ten or eleven.

M: Now, you told me about one place that had burned. Where was that?

G: That's the homeplace. That's the house that I was talking about that got burned up. Yeah, it got burned up.

M: How old were you when that happened?

G: I think I was a young man when that house burned up. We went off to the church and came back; I think the house was burned up then.

M: Oh, your grandpa was with you?

G: No, Grandfather . . . let me see. Had he married again?

M: This was after he was a very old man?

G: Yes, ma'am. He was an old man. I don't know if he had married again. It got burned up after his first wife had died, so he may have been married again.

M: Do you know how it happened?

G: No ma'am, no ma'am, no ma'am. When I got back it had done burned up. I didn't hear them discuss how it happened, but it was an awful large house. I reckon he raised near about all of his children in there.

M: Now, let's see, if he died around 1940 and he was a hundred and fifteen, and you were born in 1911. . . .

G: Yes, 1911.

M: So let's see, you were born about forty years before he died. That means that he was about seventy-five years old when you were born. Do you remember your grandpa as an old man?

G: Yeah, he was an old man when I knowed him. When I was born he was

an old man and he never did shave. He had whiskers down, a beard we called it, that come down along to here on him.

M: Way down his chest, huh?

G: Yeah.

M: What about his hair, did he cut that?

G: His hair, now he didn't get white headed; his head had some gray in there but he wasn't what you'd call a white head. No, he wasn't a white head.

M: Would he keep his hair clipped?

G: Well, he didn't cut it too regularly. I have cut it, but he didn't cut it too regularly. He didn't believe in a lot of what he called "sport-like" shaving and haircuts and whatnot; he didn't believe too much in that.

M: Did he wear the beard just in his old age?

G: Well, it seems like he said he just had to shave twice in his life. I heard him make that statement. It may not have been, but it seems like I have heard him make that statement.

M: Was he pretty active right up to the time he died?

G: Oh, yes ma'am. He was active. He never did believe in no doctors; he never did believe in no doctor or nothing. When he went to the doctor, my daddy carried him to the doctor and he didn't want to go. He was way up in age then. (laughter) He was active, and he didn't care for nobody. If he'd stumble and go to fall and you'd grab him to catch him, you just look out.

M: Oh, he was independent, huh?

G: Yeah, and he had put him a rope hanging down from the loft to help him get out of bed. Well, his eyesight got a little dim on him, but he'd get up on the bed and he feel around there until he found that rope. He find it and that's the way he would get up, pull himself up with it.

M: Now, did he outlive his second wife?

G: No, I think he died first.

M: Was she quite a bit younger than he was?

G: Well, I don't know. She was active too. And oh boy, he loved his "sweetens" and she with all that good candy. They never did hardly give out on him. Ever since I knowed him he was crazy about that

candy, cheese and stuff like that. He used to have a lot of cows when I was a little boy. They had nice stocks and things like that. They had buggies.

M: They had what?

G: They had a buggy. He'd hitch his horse to it and drive us up to town. He could get some things that he wanted. He ran a gristmill, he said, and gin house, Gibbs's gin.

M: You mentioned that your grandpa had a cotton gin and a gristmill. Were they on the same property?

G: The same property.

M: Did you ever see them?

G: No, I didn't see the gristmill, but I saw the old gin. It had done played out, but we were little children and used to go up in there and look at it.

M: Oh, did you?

G: Played around up in there around that old gin. I don't know how long it had been in operation, but I never did remember it operating in my days.

M: Was the thing that the mules used to turn around still there then, the mechanism?

G: Well, now that gristmill. . . . Now, you're talking about the molasses mill. He had one of them. Molasses mills now, they grind canes. They had horses to turn around there, but this gristmill, I guess, you must have had an engine to crank that up with that. I never did see nothing like that.

M: Did you ever see the molasses mill in operation?

G: Oh, yes ma'am. They operated for years and years. They hooked mules and things to it to grind cane. My oldest uncle used to mostly make all of the peoples' sorghum. They'd bring it up there. Sometimes it just be full of cane. They would bring it up there to him. My oldest uncle would make it. I had another uncle. After my oldest uncle be gone, then my other uncle would make it. Later, my daddy made some, and my mother could make it, too.

M: Would people come from long distances?

G: Yeah, everybody didn't have a sorghum mill, see. I know there were only about three out there. One was in a place they called Melton's Bottom. The other was down there at Waverly.

M: Now, I would really like to know about the people that would come to

the molasses mill. Were they always black people or did white people sometimes come?

G: Well, mostly black people when I was big enough to know. I didn't know whites to come there, unless they came there before my day.

M: You don't remember, in your time, any people who were white who would use that?

G: No, ma'am. I don't remember that. There might have been, but I just don't remember it.

M: Did your father always stay at that location?

G: Yes ma'am, that's where he stayed. He died there.

M: Did your grandpa always stay at that location? What about after his house burned? What did he do for a house then?

G: His boys got together and built him a little one-room shack. That's where he pretty well stayed in there after everything burned down. He was too old to try to build another house, and there wasn't anybody but him and his last wife. My father and them got together and built him a country shack there. That's where he stayed until he passed.

M: We've got quite a bit done today and I appreciate what you have done so far. Let's stop now and I'll come back to continue the interview. Is that okay with you?

G: Yeah, if it's okay with you.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 119  
An interview with  
Louise Rhea

conducted by  
Betty E. Mitson

edited by  
James M. McClurken



Louise Rhea was born in Troy, Mississippi on December 23, 1906. She finished her education in West Point, Mississippi and taught at the Vinton School in 1927 and 1928. Much of this transcript is devoted to Mrs. Rhea's experiences as a teacher, her daily routine, the students who attended Vinton School, the facilities and supplies that were available, and the closing of the school.

This interview was conducted with Mrs. Rhea in her home on February 8, 1980 by Betty Mitson.

M: This is an interview with Louise Rhea, Mrs. James I. Rhea, Sr., for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Betty Mitson. Mrs. Rhea's address is Route 2, Box 374, West Point, Mississippi 39773. The interview is taking place in Mrs. Rhea's home on February 8, 1980. Her telephone number is 494-3531.

Mrs. Rhea, I have come today to interview you on your experience as a teacher at Vinton. However, before that I would like to ask you a little bit about your early years. Would you tell me when and where you were born?

R: I was born at Troy, Mississippi, in Pontotoc County on December 23, 1906. I have lived in Mississippi all my life. I went to school at Troy. We lived close to three schools, and I tried them all. Then we moved to a place about six or eight miles from there, and I went to Union School. Then we moved to Springville, and I went to Springville School until I was in high school, when I went to Agricultural High School one year. Then I came to West Point and went to school. I was in the eleventh grade when I came to West Point, and I graduated from the twelfth grade at West Point high school. That was the last class at Lynch High School because it burned the next year, before graduation.

M: That was after you left the school?

R: After I left the school; my class was the last class. We had our fiftieth year anniversary in 1977.

M: Oh, did you attend?

R: Yes, I did; it was here.

M: Was there a goodly number of people there?

R: Not too many in our class. Some live so far away, and even some that live as close as Starkville did not come. We had thirty-four that graduated. Back then schools were quite a bit smaller than they are now.

M: Do you remember how many came to the reunion?

R: I believe not over ten.

M: That is quite a few for a fifty-year reunion.

R: That's right. Well, there are so many who have died since then. I believe that there are about ten who have died.

M: Had your parents also been raised in Mississippi?

- R: Both of them had been raised in Mississippi. My father was raised in Clay County, but my mother was from Chickasaw County. After they married, my father never lived in Clay County anymore. His father, and a Mr. Miller, and another man--I can't remember his name--were the first settlers of the Una community, up here in Clay County. They migrated here from South Carolina.
- M: Do you know when that was?
- R: No, that was so far before my father's day. My grandfather was ninety-two when he died. My father was only thirteen when his father died, and his mother died when he was three, I believe.
- M: So your father was born in your grandfather's old age?
- R: Yeah, that's right.
- M: And was your mother's family in Mississippi for a long time, too?
- R: Oh, yes, they were here for all their lives. My grandfather was reared over here near Steens, close to Columbus, and his people came from. . . . I'm not sure just where they came from, but we have quite a history of that, now. There were two brothers, one settled at Steens and one in Ohio. The year before last, one of the relatives from Ohio came to a family reunion, and we didn't know anything about them. They didn't know anything about us, but. . . . Statistics, they just can't get them correct. There's a man that lives in West Point. They have him on this family tree as my mother's first cousin. He's not a first cousin; I don't know how close of kin they are, but his mother was a Tunnell, too.
- M: That's your maiden name?
- R: That's my mother's. Mine was Smith, but my mother's was Tunnell. They call it Tunnell now, but a lot of them call it Tunnell (accented differently). We laugh about it so much because we have sisters that married brothers. My mother's two first cousins live across the road from each other. One is a Tunnell and the other is Tunnell. Their husbands were brothers, and they were sisters. That's the way they distinguish their names now. We laugh quite a bit about that.
- M: May I ask how many children you have?
- R: I have three children--two boys and a girl.
- M: Would you name them?
- R: James lives here, Herbert lives in Carthage, Mississippi, and Alice Scallions lives in Columbus. She teaches at Franklin Academy, and her husband is principal of Brandon School. Franklin Academy is the oldest free school in Mississippi.



M: Is that right? It has been in continuous operation, I suppose.

R: Oh, yes, very much so.

M: So your children are staying in Mississippi?

S: All of them are still in Mississippi, as far as I know. Unless Alice and her husband Jerry move to some other state to teach, we will all remain in Mississippi.

M: I understand that at some point in your early years, you began to teach. How did that come about?

R: Well, back when I graduated, it was very common for girls. When they finished high school and they didn't want to go to college, they could take a teacher's examination and teach. That's what I did; I took a teacher's examination, got my certificate, and taught. Work was not plentiful for girls back then.

M: Were you directly out of high school?

R: Directly out of high school, others just like me took it at the same time.

M: Where was that?

R: Here in West Point. We took the exam at the courthouse. There was about three days of it. We had to take it on all elementary subjects.

M: Was it all written?

R: It was all written, then they graded it. The certificate you got was according to whatever grade you made. Pay was very little then; I got fifty-five dollars a month. Of course, I had to pay my board and things like that out of the money, but I got five dollars a month more for first year teaching than the rest of them had gotten. We had gotten a five dollar raise that year.

Teaching was really interesting. I loved children and always have. I've worked with children all of my life. There was a large family of us, so I guess that accounts for that. But it was kind of hard. I don't feel like the children get as much time as they should when there is just the one teacher. I didn't have a sixth grade there, and I believe there was one other grade that I didn't have. Of course, with just one child to a grade, the students didn't have any competition to spur them on. But, I think I was happy with my teaching. The people were satisfied with me; they asked me to come back even two years after--as long as they had a school--but my husband didn't want me to teach.

M: I want to ask you about this test and how you happened to take it. Was it because you knew there was an opening for a teacher, or was it because you wanted a certificate and you felt maybe you could find an opening?

R: Well, I took it because I wanted the certificate. You could usually get a county school position or something, if you had a certificate.

M: How soon after were you able to be placed?

R: Well, it wasn't very long because we had the exams the first thing after school was out.

M: So you started in the following fall?

R: Started in the fall of 1927 and taught until the spring of 1928. We had a county superintendent who would visit the schools to see how you were teaching, how you were doing, and if they thought you were qualified and things like that. Mr. Tom Saul was county superintendent at that time.

M: Will you repeat that name?

R: Mr. Tom Saul; he's dead now. He was here in West Point. He was sheriff then--almost three times straight, and that was when you couldn't succeed yourself. After he was sheriff, the man who was elected died about two months after he went into office. Mr. Saul got the job back then because he could fill the unexpired term. Then he was elected the third time because he was filling an unexpired term. That was something back then!

M: If he came from West Point, does that indicate, then, that the school was county supported, or was it state supported?

R: Well, both.

M: But it wasn't a Vinton-supported school?

R: Oh, no. All of the public schools then were state and county supported not local. I had fifteen students, and they ran all the way from six years to fifteen and sixteen in age.

M: What were the ranges of grades? Did you start with kindergarten?

R: No, first grade.

M: First grade to what?

R: Through eighth.

M: You mentioned that you didn't have any students in the sixth grade. Were there any other grades that you didn't have students in?

R: There was one other one, but I'm not sure just which one it was.

This Uithoven boy--we called him Eldridge then, that's what he went by then--was such a sweet, little old boy. He was just wonderful in history. I just enjoyed him so much; he was just a nice little boy.

- M: Was his father Dr. Jan Uithoven?
- R: Yes, his father was Dr. Uithoven. He was from Holland.
- M: Did his father ever come to visit you at school?
- R: Well, he wasn't able at that time. He was on the school board, but he was almost bedridden because he was a real old man. See, he had children that were older than his wife, I suppose.
- M: So Felix was one of his younger children?
- R: Oh, yes, one of his younger children.
- M: I called him Felix, but what did you say that you called him?
- R: Eldridge.
- M: Do you know if Felix is a nickname?
- R: No, I believe that is part of his name. When he went into military service, he started using Felix, I think. He was next to the youngest child. There were three of this set of children--Guise who lives in Columbus, Eldridge that lives over on the Tombigbee River, and Frances, his sister, who lives over here on Eshman Avenue. She is my sister-in-law now.
- M: Eldridge's sister is your sister-in-law?
- R: Yes. She is my husband's brother's wife.
- M: Do you remember the names of any of the other students?
- R: Yes, I had three Wilson children, Lucille and Edward--they called him Buddy--and Belle. Mae was an older child; I didn't teach Mae. And then I had several little children. I had three Harris children, Lucille and the older one who is now dead. I can't think of her name now. Isn't it awful when you can't think?<sup>1</sup>
- M: We all have that problem. We can add names later.
- R: Then I had two McCormicks: Tom--we called him Tom Dick--and Eddie Lee. They both live here in West Point now. And I had Louise Coggins and Billie Andrews. Billie Andrews was a prisoner of war for a long time in World War II. He got out in poor condition but overcame it.
- M: Do you have any particular recollections about any of the other students?

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After the interview, Mrs. Rhea thought of two other students: Jessie Harris and Annibell Harris, the one who died.

- R: Well, I had a good time with them. I think I got along well with all of them, and I was very pleased with my year's work.
- M: When you conducted the class, because there were students in different grades and very few in each grade, would it be necessary for you to spend a lot of your time going up and down the aisles talking to individual students?
- R: No. We had a stage, and they came up on the stage for their classes.
- M: Would you like to explain what your day's routine was like?
- R: Well, of course, we always had to build a fire. There was just one room. We had one of these long wood heaters in the middle of the room. We had a stage and an organ, which wasn't very good, on the stage. To begin with, we always had devotional each morning.
- M: What would that entail?
- R: There would be some Bible reading with a prayer. Then we'd start our classes, and we'd have class until about ten o'clock. Then we'd have a few minutes of recess. And then we'd come back and have class until noon. We had an hour for lunch and then went back. I taught until four o'clock in the afternoon.
- M: When you would begin class, would you start with one grade and work on up?
- R: Uh-huh. We usually had reading or something like that first, and then you'd go on through the routine that each one had. Say you were teaching English, you would teach all of the English classes right on through, each one separate, of course.
- M: When you would bring one student to your desk, what would the others be doing at that time?
- R: Well, they'd be studying. However many were in that class would come up for that class; if there was just one, of course, there'd just be one student. It was harder to teach just one student. Of course, they were getting individual attention, but I think it was better when there was more than one to a class.
- M: What would it vary from, one to how many for a class?
- R: About all of them had three.
- M: While you were teaching one class, did the others know what to do, or was this a mischief problem?
- R: No, back then the children knew to study. They didn't have as many activities as they have today to take their minds off of what they were supposed to do.
- M: Did you ever have spelling bees?

- R: Yes, we had spelling bees. We didn't particularly have celebrations of presidents' birthdays and things. We would mention whose birthday it was. We did occasionally have picnics when the weather got pretty, maybe just once or twice during the year.
- M: Would that involve the rest of the family, too?
- R: Just the children.
- M: Would you have it on the school grounds?
- R: On the school grounds.
- M: Would this be on their lunch hour?
- R: Sometimes it would include a little more time than that. It would be on the school grounds and just the school children attended. They could play more and have more games and things like that. After all, when you only have an hour for your lunch and to do what you have to, go to the restroom, and what have you--of course, we had an out-of-doors restroom, (laughter) and too many couldn't go at a time--why, that didn't leave much time for them to play or have any activities.
- M: If they had to go out to the outhouse, did they have to raise their hands?
- R: They had to wait their turn, that's right. And the schoolhouse was right on the bank of the road.
- M: About how far back from the road do you think it was?
- R: It was just a few feet. I don't believe that it was over twenty feet from the road on one side, and the front of it was about fifty or sixty feet from the road, I guess. It was right in the bend of the road.
- M: Let's talk about where that is located. Would you give me a description of the location of that school?
- R: Well, I guess you would call it the White Station Road, this Monroe County Road. I believe that is what they called it. It is from over here at the corner where Barton Ferry. . . . You go to Barton Ferry or you can go to Aberdeen up that road.
- M: Would you call that the Aberdeen/Vinton Road?
- R: I believe it would be called the Vinton Road. The school was about a mile, or a little better, from the Barton Ferry corner.
- M: Do you mean where you turn from Highway 50?
- R: No. The intersection for the Town Creek Road is right out here about a mile from my house. You take a left from Highway 50 like you were

going to Barton Ferry, and that's called the Town Creek Road. After you pass Town Creek, you go, oh, I guess about a mile and a half and then take a left on the Vinton Road. There's not another road that goes in that direction after you pass Town Creek. . . . Well, there's a road right after you pass Town Creek that turns to your left, but the left turn after that is the one that takes you to Vinton.

M: And when you said there's a road down the side of the school and a road in the front, is that the same road or are there two roads intersecting?

R: There's two roads intersecting. This White Station Road comes into Vinton Road.

M: I see. Is that still called the White Station Road?

R: Well, I would think it is.

M: And on that side, facing the White Station Road, would you guess it's about sixty feet from the road to the school?

R: No, from the White Station it's about twenty feet.

M: From White Station it's about twenty. And that's the road that goes by the side of the school?

R: The schoolhouse sat east and west, and this road would be on the north side of it.

M: Which road did the school face?

R: It faced on the Vinton Road.

M: I see. And then the White Station Road would be at the side of the school?

R: The side of the school, that's right.

M: Was there a side door that faced that road as well?

R: No, there was not a side door. There was a door on the west end, and double doors on the east end, the front of it.

M: Which door did the children come in when they came to school?

R: They came in the front door, but they went to the restroom through the other door because it was to the back. And there was a well there in the yard with a pump.

M: Where was that located?

R: That was between the schoolhouse and the toilet.

M: Was that straight out in back?

R: Yes, straight out in back. My sister-in-law used the water in that well, until a few years ago.

M: Where did she live?

R: Well, she's just south of where that schoolhouse was. They own that property now. In fact, I believe that their grandchildren Mrs. Rita (Terry) Coggins and Mike Booker have possession of the school property now.

M: I don't think we actually said what the name of the school was when you were teaching there.

R: Vinton.

M: It was called the Vinton School?

R: Yes.

M: Was the property privately owned at that time?

R: Well, no, it wasn't. You see, all schools like that belonged to the county.

M: And the land as well?

R: Yes.

M: So, it came into private ownership later?

R: Yes, when they did away with the school, they sold the land.

M: When you had a fire in the heater in the morning, did you have to build that yourself?

R: Usually.

M: How did you get the fuel for it?

R: The patrons of the school provided wood for the stove.

M: Would they cut that in the fall of the year?

R: Just as you needed it, really, but we always had wood.

M: Where would your wood stack be?

R: It would be outside, close to the schoolhouse. The children usually brought the wood in; I didn't bring it in.

M: Did you have to get to school early to build the fire, or did you come at the same time the children did?

R: Well, I always got there before they did to build a fire and make it warm.

M: Would they bring the wood in ahead of time, then?

R: Yes, the night before. We had some large boys that could do that.

M: Where did you live when you were teaching?

R: Well, I lived way back there about two miles. I walked through the field part of the year; then I boarded with a lady close to there. No, I boarded with a lady close, at first. Then she got sick and wasn't able for me to board with her. So then I boarded with this other lady who was elderly. She had two daughters who were a little older than I was, but they were both at home. She had one son, and he was my future husband's best friend, so we got along fine. (laughter)

M: Do you recall the names of the people you boarded with at these different times?

R: Yes. The first one was Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Andrews.

M: And where did they live?

R: They lived where my sister-in-law lives now, just south of where the school stood.

M: Oh, so they were close to school.

R: Yes. And then these others, the house is just about torn down. It's way on down this road before you get to the turnoff to go to Vinton.

M: Oh, so it's right on this main highway?

R: No, it was on the Barton Ferry Road. And I walked through the field. It was lots nearer and, of course, it was not as muddy to go through the fields as it would be to go down the road. Back then the roads were not like they are now. (laughter)

M: They wouldn't throw gravel on them, I guess.

R: They would, but it was muddy and they would mire down that gravel.

M: What was the name of this family that was along the road?

R: The Freemans.

M: You mentioned a boy in the Freeman family in connection with your husband. I understand you were not married when you were teaching.

R: That's right.

M: So, at the time you lived with the Freemans, this young man who was a



friend of the Freeman boy was the person who later became your husband. Is that right?

R: Yes. We were engaged then.

M: Oh, you were? When you started the job, were you already engaged?

R: Well, practically. I was going with him way before then.

M: So, when you stopped teaching, did it have something to do with the fact that you were engaged?

R: Yes, I knew I was going to marry after school was out. My husband didn't want me to teach, so I just didn't teach anymore. (laughter)

M: Was there an expression of desire on the part of the people who ran the school that they would like you to stay?

R: Yes, they asked me to stay, and they asked me to come back a year later and two years later. As long as there was a school there, they asked if I didn't want to come back, but I had children by that time.

M: How soon after you finished teaching did you get married?

R: I married in April 1928. April, the first. (laughter)

M: Was school out at that time?

R: Yes, it was just out. I got married just as soon as school was out.

M: Where were you married?

R: At the Baptist parsonage here in West Point. Dr. Wright married us. It was April the first, and it was a beautiful day, but it was cold.

M: Did any student or any student's family come to your wedding?

R: No, it was just a private wedding.

M: I want to ask you some questions about activities in school, so we'll go back a little bit. Do you recall if on Washington's Birthday there was any special celebration, or if you just talked about it in school?

R: We just talked about it, discussed his life and what he meant to the country.

M: Was it the practice in those days for children to draw pictures about special things like that or to have pictures on the wall?

R: Not that I recall.

M: I don't suppose that there were many magazines in those days to get clippings from?

R: No, not very many.

M: Do you remember anything at all that you might have put up on the walls?

R: I don't believe I do.

M: What sort of blackboard did you have?

R: Well, we had a blackboard that covered practically--of course, the schoolhouse was small--one side from the door on over to the corner.

M: So, it didn't cover the whole side of that one end?

R: No.

M: Was it really black slate?

R: No, it was just painted--a smooth blackboard.

M: But it was painted black?

R: Yes, it was not slate.

M: You used chalk and erasers?

R: Yes, we used erasers and chalk.

M: Would the children be delegated to go and clean the erasers?

R: Yes. (laughter) They liked to do things like that, too.

M: Did the children use slates themselves, or did they have notepaper?

R: No, they had tablets and pencils.

M: Who furnished those things.

R: They furnished it all.

M: When school started, was it up to the parents to go and do the shopping for the children?

R: Yes, all their books and all the things that they would need--the coloring crayons, the tablets, the pencils, and things like that.

M: Now, when you say "books," did that involve textbooks?

R: All our textbooks then; the children had to furnish their own textbooks.

M: And how would they obtain those?

R: Well, they'd just have to buy them.

M: Would they be available in town?

R: Oh, yes, they had regular bookstores.

M: Would these be bookstores that supplied things other than just textbooks?

R: Well, usually it would be a drugstore, or something like that, that would have a section with nothing but schoolbooks. They would have a list of what they would need for the children--of course, they wouldn't know the number--and they would have them in by the time school started. Then you could go down there and purchase them.

M: What would happen to those textbooks when those children would move up to the next grade?

R: They would sell them to the children below them at a reduced cost, as long as they were usable.

M: As teacher, would you handle that?

R: Well, not particularly. The parents would usually do that. When my children were in school, I know that there was one lady who had a daughter just younger than my sons, and she always asked me the year before to buy a set of my children's books.

M: I suppose they were in pretty good condition?

R: They were in pretty good condition, yes. Then when her child got through with them, why, she could sell them. Of course, it was at a reduced price each time, and the price was according to the condition the books were in.

M: Now, would there be other things in the school that would supplement their books? For instance, would you have a set of encyclopedias?

R: Well, at Vinton they didn't, but of course the large schools did.

M: Do you remember anything else that was supplementary in the classroom, like a small bookcase in which you had any particular items?

R: No, they didn't have anything like that.

M: As a schoolteacher, do you recall having to dig into your own pocket to get any supplies for the school?

R: Well, some I did, if I wanted something special.

M: Would you do that more often than you would go to the school board and say, "I need such-and-such."

R: Yes. Well, really, you didn't go to the school board and tell them you

needed so-and-so. Whatever you were going to get, you got it. And that wasn't very much, I'll tell you, if anything at all. School is so different now. Children just don't realize the opportunities they have today. Yet, I don't know; I think some of the older ones who went to earlier schools did better than in some of the schools that have so much. If they're really interested in school. . . . They have so much in this day and time to detract from education. There are things that they could learn later in life. That would be just as well for them, I think.

M: Were there desks in Vinton School?

R: Yes, we had desks. Of course, they weren't these modern desks. There would be two children to a desk.

M: Do you mean two attached chairs, side-by-side?

R: No, they were not chairs; they were more like a bench that would have the desk all the way across. There'd be an inkwell right in the middle, if you wanted to use the ink. And they'd have a shelf right under the desk for you to put your books. Whatever you were not using, you could keep inside the desk, and what you was using, you could keep on the top.

M: Would two children share the same inkwell?

R: Well, most of the time they did.

M: Was that double desk divided at all?

R: No.

M: Would the bench be attached in some way to the table, to the writing area?

R: Yes, it was made altogether.

M: Would it be attached with metal pieces?

R: Yes.

M: Would there be storage area under the seating?

R: No, not under the seating. There would be a little shelf under the top of the desk. See, it was about three feet across the top, I would guess, and two children would share that one desk. There would be a bookshelf all the way across, underneath the top.

M: The top wouldn't lift up, would it?

R: No.

M: They'd store their things for the day under the top.

- R: Uh-huh. And they were up higher than these chair-desks are. They could sit straight and work on the top of this desk. Where they have these chairs, they kind of have to bend over, I think.
- M: Was there a back to the benches?
- R: Yes, there was a back to it.
- M: Would they have special writing programs? In other words, something like the Pittman program, where they had to make circles and things like that?
- R: Yes.
- W: Would you periodically have timed writing tests?
- R: Yes.
- M: Would there be any certificate for that?
- R: No, we didn't have certificates.
- M: Would you collect the papers to see how much writing they'd done and to check the style of writing?
- R: Yes, that's right, to see the progress they'd made.
- M: The pens had little divided nibs, didn't they?
- R: That's right.
- M: Those can be kind of scratchy, can't they?
- R: (laughter) They sure can! Especially when they get dull and worn down.
- M: I suppose those were kept in a little pencil box?
- R: They usually kept them on the desk. At the top of the desk there was a groove so they would not roll off the desk.
- M: When the school term would start, would the students have a little pencil box that they would bring to school?
- R: No, they didn't have pencil boxes back then.
- M: Did the students learn poetry in your classes?
- R: No, not particularly.
- M: Was there any memory work to do?

R: Oh, yes, we had quite a bit of memory work.

M: What kind?

R: Well, it's just owing to the grade what kind they had. Some of it would be rhymes, and just different things.

M: That's what I had in mind. There would be some kind of memorizing to do, over and above the studying.

R: Yes, that's right.

M: Would the students sometimes recite those before the class?

R: Yes.

M: Do you think that learning rhymes and memory work helped with learning multiplication tables, for instance?

R: Well, for some people it does, and for some it doesn't. Now, memory work, when I was young, was just real easy for me. I'm not bragging or anything, but I could just read a piece two or three times, and then I could recite it. But for the others it's hard, so I think it's owing to whether or not you like it, or something like that.

M: Now, in later years, there's been quite a discussion about the right way to teach reading. There's the phonetic method where you teach the sounds of the letters, and then there's the method of sight reading where you just show a word and expect a child to remember it. I wonder if you remember what the method was when you taught and if you have any opinions about it?

R: Well, it's been so long. But to me, I still think they ought to have more of the old-timey method than some of this newer method. I believe they're going back to it, more or less, now. Like a lot of these things they've been trying to change, they're going back to the older method. They've decided it's better.

M: Do you recall when you taught reading, if you would teach the students the sounds of the letters?

R: Well, we did; we learned our letters. Whereas, today so many children read and don't even know all their letters. I don't understand how they do it.

M: Did they have a special little reader in which they did some coloring?

R: No, we didn't have that back then.

M: There wasn't any special book just for coloring?

R: No.

M: What about Childrens' Day?

R: Well, That didn't come within our school months. That's along about May or sometime like that, and our school was out before then.

M: Do you recall what happened the Christmas you were there?

R: No, not really.

M: You don't recall whether there was a tree in school?

R: No, I know we didn't have a Christmas tree, because we were out of school before Christmas. A lot of people back then just didn't put up Christmas trees like they do now. I've had a Christmas tree ever since I've been married--other than a year or so ago when I was going to be away from home--even since my husband died. I still have a Christmas tree. I just don't think it's Christmas without that Christmas tree.

M: But when you were a little girl, it wasn't really the custom in the country areas to have a tree in the home?

R: Well, we usually did, but a lot of people didn't. We made our own decorations back then, too, out of crepe paper, and popcorn, and stuff like that. We'd get crepe paper and make chains, and little bows and things to put on the tree. Sometimes we'd put all our Christmas cards on them. The decoration was quite different from what it is now. (laughter)

M: You grew up in a different area than Vinton. Would you say that those students in your class from the Vinton area had Christmas trees in their homes, as far as you know?

R: Well, I'm sure they did. By that time, I'm sure they did. The majority of them, at least.

M: Do you remember the names of any of the other teachers that came before or after you?

R: Coy Tribble taught the year before I did, and then she got married. That school had a reputation for teachers teaching one year and getting married. And the year before that, Doris Shirley taught, and then she got married. I don't know who taught before then or who taught after I did. I believe they just had school, maybe two years after I taught, but I don't remember who taught then.

M: If the school lasted only two years after you taught, what happened to it?

R: They consolidated it with the city school here.

M: In West Point?

R: In West Point.

M: So that school closed?

R: That school closed. Clay County only has two public schools; the county schools are Clay High and Beasley. The schools consolidated with West Point and are known as Municipal School District-West Point. They're all consolidated except the private school.

M: Do you know how they got the children in to West Point after that time?

R: They bused them in. My husband drove a school bus for ten years, and he bused the children in.

M: I suppose that was in addition to other things that he did?

R: Yes.

M: Busing was not ever a full-time occupation?

R: No, well, Jim was crippled, and he couldn't do anything for a long time. He had his leg broken in two places and, in fact, he was unconscious for fifteen days. They didn't think he was going to live. His head was all mangled up. He was in a cast for over six months. So after about two years, they asked him to drive a bus. He started driving the bus, and he did that because he couldn't do anything else. He was drawing just twenty dollars a month off of an insurance policy, so he gave up his insurance.

M: Now, this would be in the 1930s, wouldn't it?

R: Just about the 1940s. He drove the bus ten years, and then he started back to work, too. He hadn't worked but just a little while and he had a bad heart attack. They still asked him to drive the bus after that. He said, "No way will I do it. Those children is in my hands and I'm responsible for them. I just wouldn't do it. I wouldn't hurt none of them." So he gave up that and, of course, he was never able to do anymore work. He lived seventeen years, though. When he died, the doctor said, "No one in the world was going to make me believe that he would live for seventeen years." But I think the reason he did was, he went to a chiropractor.

When he started, he didn't believe in one for anything. I was going to one for my crippled knee, and he told me, "I'd like to try Jim." Three or four times before, whenever he'd get to coughing real bad, they'd send him to Memphis to specialists. Every doctor he had tried couldn't do anything. The doctor in Memphis just knew that he had cancer of the lungs. He'd ask Jim every few minutes, "How many cigarettes do you smoke in a day?" He said, "Man, I've never smoked a half dozen cigarettes in my whole life." Well, he'd turn around and in a few minutes he'd ask him again, so he never could do anything for him. When this chiropractor asked to try, he said, "Well, you can try, but you won't do anything for me. No doctor ever has, and I know you can't. He



said, "Well, I may not, but I'd like to try." So he went up there to him, and he started in the back of his neck. He said, "Well, Doctor, here in my chest is where it is." He said, "I can help it; those blood vessels are clogged back there. That's what's causing it." You know, he stopped that cough. Every time he'd start coughing, he'd go back to him. I just feel like that's why he lived so long, because he went to him regular and he kept him unclogged.

M: That's amazing.

R: But when he died, he died with a heart attack. He was in a hospital with pneumonia. He had entered Monday, January 3, 1972. On Tuesday he was just doing so well that I asked the doctor about going back to work. He said, "Well, you could have gone today if you had wanted to. Just go ahead."

Well, I went back on Wednesday, and just about eleven o'clock they called me and told me to come to the hospital. I knew something had happened, so when I got there he had already passed away. It was just that quick, but he was just feeling fine up to the minute he died.

M: When he ran the school bus, did he have to buy his own bus?

R: No, the buses were county owned, and they furnished the fuel for them. He was just paid a salary to drive.

M: I see. Now, before I finish, I have a couple of other questions to ask you. Do you recall whether or not the children ever celebrated Halloween?

R: I believe we didn't at that time. We did after that but not right then.

M: In the North, of course, along with Washington's birthday, Lincoln's birthday is commemorated. I assume that didn't happen here.

R: No, that didn't happen.

M: Now, this is a question about Christmas, and it really doesn't relate to the school, but I would like to know from your own experience if you recall anything about any special celebration at Christmastime in the area that you might have lived. I've heard that some people participated in what they called "serenading." It was a special kind of noise-making time at Christmas. Is that word serenading familiar to you at all?

R: Yes, Christmas caroling has been going on for many, many years. Our church always goes out Christmas caroling to the shut-ins, and the elderly people and things like that. The ones that participate, I think, get a great blessing out of it, and I know the ones they visit do because I've had them to visit me. I enjoyed it so much and I know it's a blessing to everybody.

M: This is a West Point church?

R: Yes.

M: Would you like to name the church?

R: The First Baptist Church and I'm a member there. All of the churches do it, not just our church. Most of them have a Christmas cantata, and that's real good.

M: Is that usually on Christmas Eve?

R: Well, it's somewhere right near Christmas; it's for Christmas.

M: Is it usually the Sunday before Christmas?

R: Most of the time it is.

M: In the evening?

R: Yes, at about five o'clock in the afternoon.

M: We heard about some kind of special celebration out at Darracott, and I wonder if you might have heard it when you stayed there in Vinton. What I'm talking about is, on Christmas morning at Darracott there was what they called the "shooting of the anvils." Have you ever heard that expression?

R: No, I haven't.

M: I want to ask you a little bit more about your husband. In some areas people do have to buy their own school buses, so I wondered if in Mississippi sometimes people had to buy their own school buses.

R: Well, not in later years. They did in earlier years, but not in later years. When my husband started driving, he went to Fort Valley, Georgia and drove back the bus he was going to drive, but it was county owned. At that time, the county owned the buses that they ran.

M: Even though your husband didn't own the bus, he had to go and pick it up?

R: He went to Fort Valley, Georgia, picked it up, and drove it here. Then, when school started, he drove the bus. He kept it parked out here when he was not using it. He was allowed to come home in the bus after he made the morning round, bring it back at night after he made the afternoon round, and then just let it sit out here until the next day. Of course, on the weekends it was just sitting here and not being used. The county furnished the gas and the bus, and he was paid a salary.

M: Did you say that sometimes he'd have one of your youngsters with him?

R: He had our baby, our little girl, Alice. She was fifteen and a half years younger than our youngest son. If I needed to go to a club meeting or anything, he would put her in an apple box and sit her at his feet on the bus. She would ride with him to make the round on the bus. She enjoyed it because she was just a baby and she liked the riding.

M: I supposed she liked to hear the kids, too?

R: Oh, yes. And she was really daddy's girl.

M: Did you tell me that one of the members of his family had driven a school bus before him?

R: His brother did; that was before we married. His brother drove a school bus, but he had to own his own bus then. Later the county started buying their own buses.

M: I don't believe I asked you for a very full description of Vinton School. Could you give me some idea as to the dimensions of the school?

R: I imagine it was about 20'x30'. I doubt if it was anymore than that.

M: And what did it look like on the outside?

R: Well, it was a little white building, and it had weatherboard siding.

M: I know what you mean. Did the boards go horizontal?

R: Yes, and it was walled up with that. It was painted white on the outside, and on the inside was beaded sealing.

M: A beaded ceiling? What do you mean by that?

R: Well, that's a sealing that has these little grooves all in it. The boards are four inches wide and each one has a groove down in the middle of it. It's tongue and grooved together so it will be real tight.

M: Is the wood very similar to flooring?

R: Well, on the order of that, but it would be four inches wide, or in different width. It was tongue and grooved, and it was fancier than flooring. Of course, it was dressed-up like. It had a little beading where it went together, was grooved in together, and then one right in the middle of the four-inch plank.

M: Now what do you mean by "beading"?

R: Well, they called it beading. It was just a little beveled edge sticking up.

M: Would it be a beveled edge that would be like a strip along the board?

R: Well, it would look like it, but it was cut into that board, you see, like you were going to make a groove or trench or something, you know, and then it'll have a little built-up there.

M: Now would that be in every plank?

R: Every four inches, yes ma'am. Where the sealing joined, it was grooved together and looked like the groove in the middle of the four-inch sealing.

M: And how were the walls finished on the inside?

R: They were the same thing, the beaded sealing.

M: Beaded walls?

R: Uh-hum.

M: What would the floors be?

R: Well, now the floors were just plain, grooved together, four-inch or six-inch flooring.

M: Wide planks?

R: Uh-huh, but they were grooved together, too.

M: You don't know what kind of wood that would have been, do you?

R: Pine, I imagine.

M: Who looked after the cleaning of the building?

R: We did.

M: You and the students?

R: Yes.

M: Would the outside be plain with no porch or any overhangs?

R: There was just a little stoop over the front door, that's all.

M: Would the building be set up off the ground?

R: Yes. It was up on pillars. I believe it was brick pillars.

M: You don't recall whether there was any lattice work around there?

R: No, there was not.

M: It was open underneath?

R: Open.

M: Did the children ever climb under there?

R: Well, I don't recall it if they did.

M: Do you know why they built buildings up off the ground?

R: No, I don't really know, but I guess it was just customary at that time. I know that all the homes used to be built up off of the ground like that.

M: Would there be pillars just at the corners?

R: Oh, no, they'd have to have them every so many feet to support the building so it would be steady.

M: What about in the middle of the building, would pillars be under there as well?

R: Yes, they would have some through the middle, too.

M: Where was the stove located in the building?

R: It was just about in the middle of the main auditorium, in the middle of the building, in the aisle, and they had a flue that went outside. The pipe went up to the flue.

M: So this big stove stack went up in the middle of the building?

R: That's right.

M: Did you say "auditorium?" Is that what the terminology was for the room?

R: Yes, that's what they called it. In the summertime, when the weather wasn't bad, they'd have Sunday school out there.

M: You'd be like a Sunday school teacher?

R: Well, I taught some.

M: Who conducted the Sunday school?

R: Well, now Mr. Howard, Mr. George Howard's father, used to be superintendent out there, and just different ones for so long, you know.

M: Would this be a community-organized Sunday school?

R: Yes.

M: It wasn't under any particular church?

R: No, just community. Every denomination attended that wanted to.

M: I see, and this was mainly in the summertime?

R: Yes.

M: Would it be only on Sunday or during the week as well?

R: Sundays, Sunday afternoon.

M: Every Sunday?

R: Uh-hum.

M: After the school closed and consolidated, did the building still stand for awhile?

R: Yes.

M: Was it still used for the Sunday school after that?

R: They used it for awhile. Mr. A. C. Sanders conducted Sunday school after he moved out there.

M: When they moved over there?

R: Yes.

M: Do you remember when that building was taken down?

R: Not exactly.

M: You don't have any idea if it lasted for several years after the school closed?

R: Well, it wasn't too many. Well, it was several years. If you'll contact my sister-in-law over there, I'm sure she can tell you.

M: Would you say her name?

R: Mrs. Mary Booker, but she is sick right now.

M: Oh, so it wouldn't be practical to talk to her at the moment?

R: Well, I don't know just what to tell you because she has a terminal illness.

M: Oh.

R: She hasn't been doing too well the last few days.

M: I'm sorry to hear that. Was she involved in the Sunday school?

R: Yes, she went to Sunday school. She attended there and church as long as she was able, but since last summer, I doubt if she has been

because she was in the hospital most of last summer.

M: When the school building was finally gone, do you know if it was just dismantled?

R: Yes.

M: Do you know what happened to the materials themselves?

R: Well, I suppose that the ones that bought it got the materials.

M: Do you know if it was sold at auction or how it was disposed of at all?

R: No, I don't but I know they bought it. I don't know whether it was an auction of what.

M: You don't know if the structure was set up elsewhere, as another building?

R: Well, it was sold through the county. The building was torn down.

M: I mean, once it was torn down, you don't know if those materials were later constructed as a building unit?

R: No, I don't know, but my sister-in-law remodeled her house, and it could be possible that it was partly used in her house, I'm not sure; I just can't say.

M: I think I've pretty much asked you what I had planned to do. Can you think of anything that we should have covered?

R: I don't believe so.

M: I really appreciate this. You've done a very good job.

R: Thank you but I feel like it's not worth much to you.

M: It absolutely is, and on behalf of the Project and myself I thank you very much.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 120  
An interview with  
Nora Miller

conducted by  
Betty E. Mitson

edited by  
James M. McClurken



Nora Miller was born in Chickasaw County, Mississippi in 1896. Her interview is primarily biographical and deals with life on a farm in western Clay County, Mississippi. She describes childhood activities, household tasks, and diet. Another important aspect of the interview is her description of the sharecropping system and its workings. The ginning and marketing of cotton are discussed in detail.

The interview with Mrs. Miller was conducted in her home on February 17, 1980 by Betty Mitson.



BM: This is an interview with Nora B. Miller at her home on 404 Griffin Street, West Point, Mississippi 39773. Her telephone number is 494-2794. The interview is for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project on February 17, 1980, and the interviewer is Betty E. Mitson.

Mrs. Miller along with her son Francis Miller has written a book titled Belle Town. I have read the book. It is largely because of my interest in the book, and in Mrs. Miller's reminiscences which she presented to the Clay County Historical Society in West Point recently, that I have come to interview her.

Mrs. Miller, would you tell me when and where you were born?

NM: I was born in Chickasaw County in 1896.

BM: Where in Chickasaw County?

NM: It was just on a farm. In those days people didn't go to a hospital or anything for a birth. I was born in my mother's home.

BM: Was it anywhere near Aberdeen?

NM: I believe it was about fifteen miles west of Aberdeen.

BM: Do you know what the closest community was?

NM: Buena Vista was the closest community at that time, I believe.

BM: Did you have brothers and sisters?

NM: Yes, I had four brothers, and there were six sisters besides myself. That was eleven of us. I was the sixth child in the family.

BM: All born at home?

NM: Yes, my mother never did go to the hospital. She had a midwife for all except the last two children.

BM: Do you remember when any of your brothers and sisters were born?

NM: There are four that I remember. I have two brothers younger than I, but I didn't remember when the older brother was born because I was only four years old then. I was six when the other brother was born, so I remember. That was just before we moved to Clay County. He was a month old when we moved.

BM: Do you remember what they did with the children when your mama was ready to have the baby?

- NM: We all had to go to the neighbor's house and spend the night. We didn't know what was happening, but the next morning, when we came back, there was the new baby. The midwife was there, and she had taken care of my mother and the baby. It was usually an old colored woman. I can't remember the midwife's name, but she was with my mother for all the children except the last two babies. We were living in Clay County. There was a doctor near enough that we had him for the last two babies. I remember that very well.
- BM: Each time there was a new baby, was it really a surprise to you children?
- NM: Yes, it was a surprise. It wasn't the custom in those days to tell the children what was happening. We usually went to the neighbor's house or my grandmother's, when I had a grandmother living. I didn't have a grandmother living when the two younger ones were born, so we went to the neighbor's house. I remember that, but I hadn't thought about it until you asked me.
- BM: Was your mother in bed for quite awhile after the birth?
- NM: Yes, they always stayed in bed for a week. The midwife would come every day for a week and take care of my mother, give her a bath, give the baby a bath, and she would come to see after her. It happened for a week.
- BM: After she was gone, was your mother in charge again?
- NM: My older sisters were large enough to take over, but some of my aunts or some of the relation would come in and help out. We always had colored people that helped in the house all the time. My mother always had a maid. We didn't call it a maid then; we just called it help. They would come everyday, take care of the baby, and help my mother with the housework. We always had one and sometimes two colored women that helped.
- BM: Would they be there daily, even when your mother wasn't having a kid?
- NM: Yes, they were there all of the time to help her with the children. They always did the washing and the ironing and the cleaning and the cooking, part of the cooking, and the dishwashing. My mother never did anything like that, not very much. She took care of the baby and she sewed. She had a spinning wheel. I remember that she made thread; I remember when she made it.
- BM: Would you like to describe that a little bit?
- NM: Well, she had this spinning wheel until I was several years old, but as I was telling my son about it--she made the thread and knitted. She would make the socks and gloves. She would have us help turn that wheel and make the thread, but I couldn't tell you how it was made because it's been so long ago.

BM: If she knitted, it was with wool, wasn't it?

NM: No, she made the cotton thread, too. They got the cotton from the gin, you see. It was in layers. I don't know what they did to make the thread, but the wool was the same way. They would take wool, pick it up, and make it into a little string to get it started.

BM: So she actually spun both cotton and wool thread?

NM: Yes, both cotton and wool.

BM: Then she used the wool for her knitting, I suppose? Do you remember seeing her weave?

NM: No, I don't remember the weaving; I don't know about that. We had a coverlet for a long time that she, her sister, and her mother made out of wool thread. They made the thread, and then made the coverlet. It was just real heavy and warm. It was pure wool, so you know it was warm. We had that for years, I remember.

BM: Was that double thickness?

NM: No, it was just a single thickness, but it was so heavy. I don't know how they got that blue, but the coverlet was blue. I remember it was a deep blue. It must have been dyed with what they call indigo. I think they had indigo in those days, but I know that they made the brown dye with roots. There was a certain root that they would dig up and make that brown dye from. I heard my mother talk about certain roots that they would go out and dig up to make dye. They would also take walnut hulls when they were green, put them in water, and just keep mashing it down until the water would be brown, and that would make a dye. Dark brown was about all they could get out of that, the roots and the walnut hulls.

BM: Do you know if they made the men's work pants?

NM: Well, they did at one time. My mother never made the pants, but she made the shirts and all of the underwear. We had what we called ducking. It was real heavy cotton material, and that's what they used for the men's underwear.

BM: Now, when you were a little girl, would she buy ducking?

NM: Yes. We would always get it by what we call the bolt, twenty or thirty yards, when my father went to Aberdeen. We had to go to Aberdeen to buy all of the cloth. She would get all of the ducking and what we called the brown domestic. She made shirts out of "shirting," and it was a heavy cotton material.

BM: By the time you were a little girl, was most of the spinning and weaving gone?

- NM: I remember her doing some knitting. She made some thread when I was small, but she didn't do that for too many years. She put the spinning wheel up, but she did knit some. She probably bought the thread because we didn't have the wool; we never had sheep.
- BM: I see. So your memories of the first place that you lived, I imagine, are pretty dim. You left there at what age?
- NM: I left Chickawas County at the age of six and moved to Clay County.
- BM: Do you remember anything specific about the place where you were born? For instance, what kind of business was your father in there?
- NM: Well, he was a farmer; he farmed for himself. He wasn't a sharecropper. He was a tenant farmer; he rented the land. When we moved to Clay County, he bought this farm and then he was a landowner.
- BM: I see. I want to go back now to the time when he was a tenant farmer. You mentioned that your mother had help in the home. Were these people that helped her just people who were hired by your mother and father? Were they your father's sharecroppers?
- NM: Well, they weren't sharecroppers with my father. They just lived nearby. They needed to work, and we gave them groceries as pay most of the time.
- BM: They would work, and they would get payed in goods?
- NM: Yes, in groceries. We would have the meat and the hog lard, because we always had our own. We raised our food, and that's what we would pay them with most of the time. We didn't have to pay money. Money was something that people didn't have much of. Not everybody raised their own food like we did, especially not the sharecroppers.
- BM: So those women who came to work, would their husbands be sharecropping with someone else?
- NM: Yes, they would probably be sharecropping with someone else, but they would live nearby.
- BM: Do you remember anything at all about what you did as a little girl at your first home? Did you go walk in the woods picking wild flowers?
- NM: Yes, we picked wild flowers, and we'd get the leaves off of the trees to make hats with, get thorns and use them for pins. We pinned those leaves together, and made big hats. (laughter) Hickory leaves would be big, you see. Oak leaves were small, but hickory leaves were large. We would gather those big green leaves, go to the thorn trees and get little thorns, and use them to pin

the leaves together. We'd make a big circle and decorate the hats with wild flowers. That's the way we passed our time. (laughter) We'd make playhouses out in the woods and take our dolls and all out there. When some of our cousins came to visit, that would be what we did. And we would get sticks for our horses. (laughter) Now, that was a pastime.

BM: Do you mean that you'd make a play horse out of wood?

NM: Out of a stick, a great long stick. It would have to be a smooth stick and it couldn't be too big or it would be heavy, but that would be our horse. We would get on it and ride that for our horse.

BM: I've heard of that. You mean that you straddled the stick and dragged the end behind you?

NM: Yes, yes. Have you seen these children riding broom handles? We didn't make ours like that. We'd just get a stick, tie a string around it for the bridle at the end of the stick, and then we'd hold it like that. (laughter) I hadn't thought about that in a long time.

BM: Did the boys and girls do these things together?

NM: Yes. The boys were the ones that rode the stick-horses all the time. (laughter) They'd have special stick-horses, and they'd hitch it to the porch. You couldn't bother their stick-horse. (laughter)

BM: So, they didn't discard their stick when they were done playing? Was that a regular toy once they picked it up?

NM: We didn't have things bought and given to us. We had to go out and make our toys.

BM: How about climbing trees?

NM: Oh, yes we climbed trees and went as far as we could to the top. We would try to get a tree that wasn't very big. We'd get to the top of the tree, catch the top of it, and make it go all the way to the ground.

BM: While you were on it?

NM: Yes, make it bend to the ground. If it wouldn't bend, then we'd have to let it go back up and we came down the trunk of the tree. (laughter)

BM: Would you hop off sometimes when you get the treetop to the ground?

NM: Sometimes we'd get it to go just as far as we could. Then we could turn it loose and drop to the ground. That was fun. We'd find the

tallest one that we could bend down. We pretty well knew if we could bend it down before we'd climb the tree because the top of it couldn't be so big that it wouldn't bend down. We'd have to let it go back up. Then we really had to hold tight. (laughter) I don't know why we didn't get hurt.

BM: That was your swing, I guess?

NM: Yes, we did it just for pastime. I know I could climb a tree. If I could get to the first limb, I would go just as high as I could go to the top of the tree. Sometimes they would bend over as far as from here to the street. We could swing it down that high.

BM: Would you say that's about thirty feet?

NM: Yes. Sometimes though, they wouldn't bend down. Some of my sisters wouldn't venture that far, but I guess I was just brave. I'd venture just as far as I could.

BM: Did you ever go barefooted in summertime?

NM: Oh, yes, we just loved for the warm weather to come so we could pull our shoes off and go wade in the ditches, go to the pools and wade in the water. That's what we enjoyed.

BM: Now, I talked to some fellows who told me that they would go swimming in the stream without any bathing suits.

NM: Well, now the boys always went to the creek and went swimming. The boys didn't go with the girls. We didn't go in swimming because we didn't have a place to go where we could swim. We would wade in deep as we could, but we didn't really have a good place to swim. You'd have to go to what they call that river now, but we called it the creek. The boys all went down to the swimming hole on Sundays. It was just a big, deep hole where they would go. They would all go down to the creek and swim on Sunday, but the girls didn't go. They couldn't go with the boys to swim because they didn't have bathing suits. I think the boys went in nude, anyway. (laughter) I'm sure they did.

BM: Maybe I'd better start asking you about your moving then because I'm sure most of your memories are at the place you moved to.

NM: Yes. I was just six years old when we moved down to Clay County.

BM: Do you want to tell me why you moved and where you moved to?

NM: We were renting the place that we were living on. We were tenant farmers on that place. My great-grandmother wanted to sell her farm in Clay County. It was a hundred and sixty acres. The place we lived on was my grandmother's place, but my great-grandmother's place was for sale. And we were just renting my grandmother's place because it had been sold and the money was divided among the children. My grandfather had died, and my grandmother had

moved away.

BM: Did this person who bought the property live elsewhere? Did he own it the whole time that your father lived there?

NM: Yes, he owned it and he didn't sell it while we were there, but my father wanted to buy a place of his own. That's why we moved away.

BM: I see. Where did that man live?

NM: He lived in Aberdeen. The man was an absentee farmer. When my father found out that my great-grandmother wanted to sell this place, he bought the place with my mother's inheritance, the money that she received from my grandmother's place.

BM: Do you have any idea how far your move was?

NM: I think it was eight miles.

BM: What was the experience of moving like?

NM: Oh, it was a great experience because that was the first time that we had moved any distance, and we knew we would have to go by wagons. My uncle came. He wasn't my real uncle but he was in the family. He had married my aunt, and she had died. We called him Uncle, and he was our neighbor where we were going to move in Clay County. He came with his wagon and team, and my father had two wagons, I believe. Anyway, we had several wagons, that moved us and all of our household furniture. The older children, my sisters and brothers--I had one brother that was older than I--they walked and drove the cows ahead of the wagon. It took us several hours to make the trip because the road was so muddy. It was in January when we moved.

The house that we moved to was a four-room log with a breezeway.

BM: Now, when you say a breezeway between. . . ?

NM: We called it a breezeway. It's a wide hall between two rooms. There were four rooms, two on each side of the hallway and a porch across the front.

BM: I see. Have you heard the expression "dogtrot house?"

NM: Well, yes. Some people call it a dogtrot house.

BM: Is that what other people normally call it?

NM: Yes, normally they call it a dogtrot house.

BM: When you were a youngster, did you ever use that expression?

NM: Well, we never heard that expression, then. We called it a breezeway. That was all we ever called it.

BM: Do you have any idea when you first heard the expression "dogtrot?"

NM: I don't know when I heard that expression.

BM: Would you think it was just in recent years?

NM: I think it's recently. I can't believe that people called those houses dogtrot houses in those days.

BM: You said there were two rooms on one side and two rooms on the other.

NM: Two rooms were on the east and two rooms were on the west. That's the way it was built, east and west.

BM: So the hall went east and west?

NM: No, the porch went east and west all the way across the front, but the hall went north and south, between the four rooms.

BM: And what were the rooms like?

NM: The two large rooms on each end were the bedrooms. One of the smaller rooms was the kitchen, and the other was the bedroom for the boys.

BM: So, on one side of the house you would have a kitchen and a bedroom?

NM: Yes, and the other side be a bedroom and a smaller room. We called the small rooms shed rooms or side rooms.

BM: Would there be a room that you would call a parlor?

NM: Well, no we didn't have a parlor. We didn't have any grown girls. My oldest sister was thirteen, fourteen or something like that. We didn't have parlors because we had to have bedrooms with that many children. Before we moved there, the kitchen had been outside of the house. All of the houses, at one time, especially where they had slaves or colored people, never had the kitchen in the house.

I want to tell you that most of the cooking was done by the colored people. I imagine that's why they had the kitchen on the outside. They cooked on the fireplace. We never used this old kitchen because we had a stove. We had a cookstove, but a lot of people didn't have them. I can remember when they still cooked on fireplaces. The husband of one of our neighbors bought her a cookstove and she got real mad about it because she had never used one. (laughter) We thought that was funny.

BM: Was that when you were still a youngster?

NM: Yes, but I can remember it, though; I can remember about it. This



outside kitchen had a long fireplace. It extended almost across the end of the room; it had just one room, and it had a dirt floor. They did the cooking on this fireplace and brought it into the house.

Everyone that had a large family or had a what we would call "several acres of ground," always had their kitchen on the outside, especially when they had colored people to do the work.

We had three big fireplaces in that house. There was a fireplace at each end, in the two big rooms, and one in the small bedroom. That's the only way we had to heat the house.

BM: Do you know when they stopped using that outside kitchen?

NM: Well, that was my mother's grandmother's home. She had visited there a lot, and she could remember when they used that kitchen. She told me about it; we always called it the "old kitchen." We never called that house anything but the old kitchen. My mother said that her sister had a wedding there. Did you ever hear them talk about when they had to have baked pigs at the weddings? They had to bake the whole pig and put it on a platter in the middle of the table. Well, that was what she told me, that her sister had at this wedding.

They had the tables outside and they had this baked pig. I don't know how. From what my mother told me, it weighed around fifty pounds when it was alive, but after they dressed it and cooked it, of course, it didn't weigh that much. They had it all fixed right in the middle of the table. It was a whole pig.

My aunt's daughter lives about five miles from here, and asked me why we didn't put the story about her mother's wedding at this house in the book. I told her that we didn't have enough space to go into the details. But I knew about it; my mother had told me about it. This cousin bought one of my books.

BM: Could they cook a whole pig because they were cooking in a fireplace?

NM: Yes, they had to cook it in the fireplace. I don't know how they cooked that whole pig like that, but they did and had it perfectly whole on this platter in the middle of the table. That was a big wedding, and I asked my mother why she didn't have a wedding like that. She said that she didn't care to go through a lot of expense and a lot of trouble. But for days and days, they got ready for that wedding, cooking and getting everything ready.

BM: Do you know if the wedding ceremony itself was held outside?

NM: Well, of course, they had to have it in the fall so the weather would be suitable to have it outside.

BM: Do you think it was a garden wedding then?

NM: Well, we would call it a garden wedding, but in those days I don't know whether they had a name for it. They just called it "the wedding in the yard."

BM: They didn't have it in the church then?

NM: No, they didn't have it in the church. They had so many people there that they couldn't have it in the house. The house wouldn't have held them. I've often heard my mother talk about that wedding. They decorated it with wild flowers, goldenrod. All the flowers that they had were goldenrods; they just had bouquets of yellow goldenrods all around. In those days, people didn't buy flowers. There wasn't anyplace to buy them. I think the wedding was in November when they had the goldenrods. I believe that is when they are so pretty, isn't it?

BM: I really don't know about Mississippi.

NM: Well, it's in the fall of the year when the goldenrods are so pretty.

BM: Do you have any idea what year the wedding took place in?

NM: I asked my cousin, and she said that she could get the date. Her brother in Memphis had it, and I asked her if she would get that date. I thought it was right about 1896 because her brother, the first child that they had, is a year younger than I am. If I was born in 1896, he was born in 1897. It must have been about 1896.

BM: Was this wedding after your mother and father were already married?

NM: Yes, they had several children. I'm older than her sister's oldest child.

BM: I see. Did your grandmother continue to live in that house until she died?

NM: No, she went to live with her daughter.

BM: Then before your parents moved there, someone else lived there for awhile, I guess?

NM: Yes, someone else lived there for awhile; they had rented it. My great-grandfather had died, and she was along in years. That's why she went to live with her daughter.

BM: Was the outside kitchen used all of the time that your great-grandmother lived there?

NM: I think it was.

- BM: And it probably changed over at the time she rented it out?
- NM: Yes, I imagine it was changed over after she left there and went to her daughter's. I never did hear my mother say that my great-grandmother used any part of the house to cook in but the old kitchen. I imagine that was used because my mother always spoke of that as the old kitchen. I know that it was used whenever she went to visit her grandmother.
- BM: What part of the house was the original construction?
- NM: Well, it had been built like it was when we moved in it.
- BM: Do you think, though, that originally it was just one room on each side?
- NM: I think it was and the shed rooms had been added to it, but I don't know when it was. We never could exactly find out.
- BM: When you say shed rooms, do you mean that the roof of a shed just continued from the regular roof line?
- NM: Well, yes. It just slants on down. You've got plenty of height to slant your shed rooms on down. The shed rooms just come up to the eave of the house, and they slope on down the side.
- BM: Would the ceiling be open in the shed room?
- NM: The shed rooms don't have a ceiling. They don't go up as high as the roof of. . . .
- BM: The top of the room would be at the slope?
- NM: Yes. You see, the shed rooms just start at the eaves and go on down; that's just another room on the side there.
- BM: So in the back of the room, the top of the roof would be kind of low then, wouldn't it? Something like in an attic?
- NM: Yes, it's lower than the other part of the house; it would naturally be lower. You just have to lower it all the way down to make a shed room, a side room as we called it.
- BM: Did your main rooms have ceilings?
- NM: Ceilings? No. When we moved there, they were not sealed. They never had finished the house. My mother told me that the house had never been finished. It was supposed to have had some rooms in the attic, too, one above each of the big rooms. Their idea was to make a stairway and have rooms up in the attic.
- BM: Well, now when you looked up in your big rooms, was it open right up to the roof?

- NM: Yes, open right up to the roof. You could see the rafters. Several years after we moved there, my father had the big rooms sealed overhead and on the sides, too. Of course, that made it look better, in a way. Those big rooms were open all the way to the top of the house and they were cold.
- BM: I was going to say that you had a lot of heat loss up there, didn't you?
- NM: Yes, we had big fireplaces in each one of those rooms. Oh, they were huge; they would take a log about four feet long, I imagine. We would burn four or five of them at a time. We'd just have the biggest fire. We had plenty of wood because the woods came right to the back of the house.
- BM: Did your dad cut all of that by hand?
- NM: Well, we had colored people to cut it. I only had one brother that was older than I, and he wasn't old enough to do very much so my father always had colored help. They'd get the wood in the summertime and bring it up close to the house. We never bothered about wood because we were right at the woods. All in the back of us, we had woods.
- BM: When you said that you had a fireplace in the bedrooms, did you usually use all of your fireplaces on a cold day?
- NM: Yes, we used all three of them. We had one in the little bedroom at the side where the boys slept, but we didn't put a fire in that one until at night. When we were going to school, we usually would make one in that bedroom. The boys would go back and make a fire. But we always kept the other two fires.
- BM: I was wondering, in the evening, on a very cold night, would you usually all gather together in the kitchen?
- NM: We would stay in my mother's bedroom. We would gather in there and pop corn and parch peanuts. My father always had popcorn and peanuts. We would have peanuts by the barrels stored down in the barn.
- BM: Did he grow them?
- NM: Yes, he grew everything we had to eat--potatoes, sweet potatoes, and popcorn. We always had popcorn, and we could just go into the barrel of popcorn, get all of the popcorn we wanted, and just pop corn as long as we wanted to. (laughter) In the winter, that was what we did at night. We would pop corn and parch peanuts. We also had a lot of nuts that we could gather. We had those black walnuts and what we called the scaly barks. They were small nuts, but they weren't hard. They weren't pecans. The tree is not exactly like a hickory tree, but they are related to a hickory tree. Then we had the small hickory nuts, but they didn't have

very much meat. The scaly barks and the walnuts, we would always gather those. We had a lot of black walnut trees close to the farm. There's one right up the street here now, and I go up there and pick them up sometimes just because I love black walnuts. They sweep them out in the street. I guess, I'm the only one that ever goes up there and picks any up.

EM: I've never heard of scaly barks. You don't see them around anymore, do you?

NM: Yes, if you go out where they are. I know this lady who lives out in a grove. She said she'd got a lots of scaly bark trees around her house. She told me to come up there sometime and pick some up.

EM: They are not the same as pecans, are they?

NM: No, they are a little hard and they are not shaped like pecans, but they are good and they have a lot of meat in them. Some of them have a lot of meat in them. They don't taste like pecans either; they're good.

EM: They aren't sold commercially, are they? You don't see them in the stores?

NM: No, but people used to pick them up, bring them to town, and sell them. They don't do it anymore. People just wouldn't be interested in them. We always would go and pick up the walnuts, bring them home, and put them in the garage. No, we didn't have a garage, but we always had a place where we could put things to keep them out of the weather.

EM: What was that storage place like?

NM: It was just where we kept the farm tools. My daddy always put his farm tools up for the winter, and he always had a certain room at the barn that he would put his farm tools in. He kept all of his plows, his farming equipment, wagon, and his buggy there. We had a buggy at that time. We always had a place for those, and we could put barrels along the sides, you see.

In those days, we always had plenty of heavy boxes. We had the store, and we got those barrels and boxes there. I don't know what used to come in those boxes now, but the barrels always had flour, and sugar, and coffee. There were different size barrels and we used them for containers for our peanuts, popcorn, and different things that we had to store.

EM: So you stored you main staple out there, too? Your flour was kept in the same place?

NM: No, our flour was kept in the house. We stored the empty barrels and boxes that we had emptied at the store. We sold coffee, but my father didn't sell flour cause people always bought their own flour in barrels. We never had sacks of flour in those days.

BM: Oh, people bought flour by the barrel?

NM: We had a half-barrel and a full-barrel, as we called it. The full-barrel was two half-barrels; one big barrel would be the same as two half-barrels.

BM: Would the half-barrel be the same shape?

NM: Yes. It would come in the same shape, but it would just be half as big as a big barrel. If you had a large family, you always bought the big barrels. I did know how much the big barrels weighed, but I forgot. But the little barrels, that's the only way we ever bought flour until after I was married. I guess I was more than grown, when I started buying flour in sacks. I know we bought flour in barrels when we first married because I remember that we just bought the half-barrel. We said that there were just two of us, and we wouldn't need the whole barrel of flour.

BM: When people around in the community bought their flour, even if they bought a barrel, would they buy it through the store?

NM: No, we had to go to Aberdeen.

BM: Would they order it through you?

NM: No, you had to get someone to bring it out for you or you had to go in your own wagon.

BM: Oh, in other words, people in the community would have to go to Aberdeen for their own supplies of that kind.

NM: Yes. We always bought the flour and the sugar from Aberdeen. I guess that's the way everybody did because [our store] didn't have flour. We could buy sugar at the store, but we couldn't buy flour because it came in barrels. You had to go to Aberdeen to get your flour. My daddy would usually go in the early fall, before the weather got bad and the roads would get so bad that he couldn't go in the wagon. He would get three or four barrels of flour. If we had some of the colored people on the farm, we would have to have enough to let them have some, too. There weren't very many of the colored people that ate too much flour. They wanted the cornmeal; they ate more cornmeal than they did flour. They would get some occasionally, but they wouldn't want it as much as we did.

BM: They made corn bread then, I guess?

NM: Yes, they made corn bread, crackling bread, and what we call water bread.

BM: Oh, what's that?

NM: (laughter) They just make it up with warm water and cook it. They called it hoe cake bread.

BM: What is in it besides water?

NM: Well, that's what they use. We used the hoecake bread, but we always would put milk and egg in ours and called it egg bread. There is a difference in egg bread and hoecake bread. Hoecake bread has a good taste to it, but when we made corn bread, we made it with milk and put egg in it. Of course, now we get the self-rising meal, but we always had to add our own soda, salt and baking powder then.

BM: Was the hoecake bread baked?

NM: Well, you could bake that on the stove or the open fire. You could put your griddle, or whatever you cooked it on, on open fire, cook it until it gets a little brown, and then turn it over and cook it on the other side.

BM: Would it be sort of thin like a pancake?

NM: Well, you could make it as thick as you wanted, but you can't make it too thick because it won't cook all the way through. My daddy always wanted a hoecake for breakfast every morning. He never did want his breakfast unless he had hoecake. My mother had a little griddle. It wasn't a skillet; it was flat on top. It just had a little edge around the side, and she would use it to make hoecake for him every morning. His breakfast, every morning, was the hoecake bread, an egg, and bacon or sausage. That was what he wanted for his breakfast.

BM: How about you? What did you have for breakfast?

NM: Well, we like it, too, but my mother just made one little hoecake. She always cooked biscuits for breakfast. She'd get up and bake those biscuits. We always had our own preserves and jelly and molasses. My daddy always made molasses for the whole family and for the colored people. We'd put it up in barrels. They would make it at a sorghum mill. They have them all around Aberdeen, over on the other side north of Aberdeen. They still make the molasses over there. They always had them out in the community, and everybody would haul the cane out there and cook it up into the molasses.

BM: Did a mill serve just one community?

NM: Well, as a rule we just had one. This man would own it, and he would get a percent of the molasses. We would all have to take it to that one mill. Not everyone had a mill because it wouldn't be practical for everyone. We only had one man that knew how to cook the molasses, and he did all of the cooking. That was the way that we had our own sorghum molasses all the time. You could make sugarcane, too. Some people would plant sugarcane and make the sugarcane syrup.

BM: So there was sugarcane grown in this area?

NM: Yes, it would grow here.

BM: Did people usually just grow it for their own use?

NM: Yes. I've heard of someone having sugarcane not to many years ago for their own use. But as a rule the frost comes so early here that it sometimes ruins the crop. You have to wait until it gets ripe, as they call it, before you could cut it and make it up. That's one reason people don't grow it here. Down in the southern part of the state, you know, they make the sugarcane. They still have the sugarcane mills down there; I'm sure they do.

BM: What community did you move to when you were a little girl?

NM: It was called Belle Town, in Clay County. That's where we moved to from Chickasaw County.

BM: Was your father a farmer there?

NM: Yes, he was a farmer; he was a tenant farmer before we moved there. He bought the land when we moved to Belle Town, and he also made "arrangements." You always have to make arrangements so that you can furnish your sharecroppers. You have to make arrangements with the bank to get some money or a loan, so that you could have money to buy your seed and furnish the sharecroppers. That's what he did. When we first moved down there, we only had two sharecroppers.

BM: Were they sharecroppers who were there before you came?

NM: No, they were people that came in and wanted to sharecrop. That's what sharecroppers would usually do if they wanted to find a home. Of course, my father would have to have recommendations. I know that he always tried to get someone he could trust to work and to stay until the crop was gathered. A lot of times, as I was telling my son today, the sharecroppers would sometimes plant their crop, get their furnish, and then they would decide that they wanted to move. They weren't suppose to, but you couldn't make them stay if they wanted to move.

BM: What did you mean by their furnish?

NM: The furnish was that they needed, like their food and clothes. It was the food, the medicine that they had to have, and their necessary things. They never had any money to buy anything with; very few ever had any money. They knew that they would be obligated, and it was always in the contract. They would write a contract. The sharecroppers would know what was in the contract all right, but you couldn't hold them to it. Even after they signed it, it was just your word. "Are you as good as your word?" That's what my father always said. He said that you had to be as good as your word. He would read the contract to them, tell them just what they were supposed to do, and asked them how much they would want in the way of food and clothes. He always tried to live up to what he



told them he was going to do. Then sometimes, when they got the crops started and all, they would just decide that they wanted to move. They'd just move off, and then he had to hire someone to finish cultivating the crop and gather it before he would get anything out of it. He'd already put out money on it, but some of the people just weren't trustworthy. He always tried to find someone he could trust. He would know that they would do what they said they were going to do.

BM: When he found someone that he could trust, would they sometimes be with him for several years?

NM: Oh, yes. We had families that stayed with us for years. My father always tried to be honest. Some people didn't. Now I know that there were people who wasn't honest, and they would take all that the sharecroppers made. If they made a good crop, they'll say, "Well, you owed it all." They'd just take it and wouldn't even have what they call a "settlement" with them. They could do them that way. A lot of sharecroppers didn't have any book sense, and they didn't try to keep a record of what they bought. All they had was what the landlord said they had bought; the landlords put it down. We always tried to keep a record of how much they owed, what all they were furnished.

BM: So beside the initial furnish, would they also get additional supplies from the man they were sharecropping with?

NM: Yes.

BM: Would he keep books on that?

NM: He kept book on it.

BM: I suppose that sometimes the landlord's store was called a commissary and sometimes it wasn't.

NM: Well, we had a store, but we didn't call it a commissary. A commissary only deals with the people on one farm, as a rule. We had a store, and we sold to everyone that came in. My father would also let people have stuff on credit. My sister was the one who kept the store after we bought it from this old man. Before we bought the store, my father didn't have but two families and he didn't have a whole lot of bookwork to keep up with.

After he bought the store, he bought some more land. He bought a hundred and sixty acres from the man who had owned the store. It was just across the road. The road divided our first place and the other place. But father could take care of it because it was right close to us.

BM: Do you mean that your father bought it from the old man's estate?

NM: He bought the store and the hundred and sixty acres of land from the estate. That made three hundred and twenty acres of land that

my father owned.

BM: Now, when he had the extra one hundred and sixty acres, did he have more sharecroppers then?

NM: Oh, yes. We had more sharecroppers then. I think we had about six families at one time and I know that my father had over a hundred bales of cotton in that fall that we had so many families working with us.

BM: Where would the sharecropper's houses be located usually?

NM: As a rule, they had to be located close to water. The only water we had was dug wells. We called them cistern wells. There was one up at the store, and there were two of them on that place that my father bought. They weren't too far apart. There was a house at each place. That was where two families of the sharecroppers lived. As a rule, the sharecroppers houses had to be close to the wells because that would furnish the water for the house. They would have to carry the water to those houses. The sharecroppers who lived down on the hundred and sixty acres that my father first bought had three cisterns. We had three cisterns down there--the one at the house, the one at the barn, and one down in the field. We could get water from any one of those, whichever place was the nearest. My father built one or two of those houses after we moved down there, and he always put them as close to the water as he could so they wouldn't have too far to carry. That was the idea, you see.

My father, he had a bored well after we had lived there for several years, but we used that cistern water for the house. It was right at the back door, close to what we called the old kitchen. That big cistern had water all of the time. We never did have to worry about not having water, but it wasn't soft water; it had a lime. It went down through lime rock. If you put soap powder in it or soap, it would just rise to the top and make a skim across it. You had to cut it with lye or something. My mother always kept ashes in a barrel to make lye for cutting that water so you could make it lather, otherwise the soap wouldn't lather in it. I wish I could show you how that water would do. And we would always catch our water in rain barrels if we possibly could, so we could have some soft water to wash clothes with. If we couldn't catch the rainwater, my mother would have to use lye. She made her own soap most all the time, anyway.

She kept a lye barrel. She'd put ashes from the fireplace where we burned the hickory wood in the barrel and made lye from the ashes. You'd have to have good, green hickory wood to make the lye. When she filled the barrel with ashes, she poured the water in the top of them. It would drain out of the bottom of the barrel, and it would be red, so strong that it would blister your hand if you put it in there. We'd have to dilute it with water before we could even use it. You just don't have any idea how strong that lye

would be. When we went to wash clothes and wash dishes, we'd just take about a half of teacup of that lye, pour it in there, and it would cut all of that lime out of the water and the soap would lather then.

BM: Wouldn't it hurt your hands?

NM: Oh, yes, you know it hurt your hands, but it wouldn't blister them after you diluted it that much. You could make soap out of lye. A lot of people made their own soap. They used that ash hopper as we call it, ash-hopper lye, and made their own soap. My mother did it a lot; she did it a long time. She'd make that soap with ash-hopper lye, take that ash-hopper lye and put it out in the yard in an iron pot. She poured the grease in there and just kept on stirring it until it would eat all of the grease up. Then it would make soap. I never did know how to do it, but she would do it. It wouldn't make hard soap; it would make soft soap. It'd be just like jelly, and she'd put that in a big wooden barrel. We'd dip it up with a gourd. That's what we used, the soap gourd as we called it. We'd go in there and dip us up a gourd filled with soap and wash the clothes.

BM: Now that would be used for washing clothes. Would it be used for dishes, too?

NM: Well, no. I never remember the time that we couldn't buy some soap, but we didn't buy much. We just bought enough to wash the dishes. (laughter)

BM: What about for taking a bath?

NM: Well, we bought the soap for taking a bath. A lot of people didn't. I've heard people say that they had to wash with lye soap, had to take a bath with lye soap. We never did have to do that. We had that store and we always had a little soap. We sold a little; we didn't sell much soap. People didn't buy soap then. Everybody tried to make their own.

BM: Now, you said that your mother made soap for the laundry. I wondered how long she continued to make soap for laundry?

NM: Well, she continued for a long time. Later she could buy this "bought-lye" in cans. I made some soap this past year. I learned how to make it from her.

Since we use the washing machine, we use the powder all the time. When we were using rub-boards and rubbing the clothes, that soap was more economical because you could rub it on your clothes and then wash it out on your rub-board. It goes farther than the powder does when you do it like that.

BM: So your mother made soap even after she could buy the lye?

NM: Oh, yes, for years.

BM: Do you think that she made it even after you were grown up?

NM: Oh, yes, as long as she was able. Well, I don't know if I can remember when she quit. I know she quit because she got in bad health, but she usually had a colored woman there who would make her soap for her. If she couldn't make it, she told her how to make it. Most of the colored people knew as much about making soap as we did because they did it for themselves when they could get the stuff to make it with. Of course, my father always had waste grease from the hogs. We had so much grease when we'd butcher those hogs. My mother would cook it up, put it in cans, and then she got ready to make the soap, why, she had it all ready. She'd just make the soap.

BM: Did you have hogs mainly for your own use?

NM: For our own use.

BM: Did you ever market hogs?

NM: Oh, yes, we did all the time. My husband always raised some to sell. He farmed, too, until we moved to West Point. We moved here from up in the county, and he had cows and farmed. That's all he did. But when we moved down here, he did public work. He worked for the road people and then he drove a school bus for several years after all of the children but Dale left home. Dale was the youngest one.

BM: I want to ask you some more questions about your fathers' farming operation. What was your father's cash crop?

NM: Cotton was his cash crop.

BM: I understand that there are two kinds of cotton, the long staple and the short staple.

NM: There was a difference in the cotton, but when we were farming, I don't know whether we had much choice. We just had to plant the cottonseed that we could get.

BM: Do you know if it was the short staple?

NM: No, I don't know, but I know that whenever we had the cotton to sell, there was a difference in it. The long staple brought more money, and we always tried to get the seed from it. We always had to buy out cottonseed to plant because the gin where we ginned our cotton left so much lint on the seed. It wouldn't to through the planter like what they called "cleaned seed" would. The oil mill in Aberdeen would clean those cottonseeds, but the regular gins didn't to it. They left a coat of cotton on the seeds. When the oil mills got to making cottonseed oil, they would clean the seeds. They had one in Aberdeen, an oil mill. I don't know if they had

one in West Point at that time or not. They cleaned all of that cotton off and they would sell cottonseed hulls.

BM: What was that used for?

NM: Well, you fed it to your cows for roughage. We've bought cottonseed hulls a lot of times. We could buy them in bags from the people that sold them. We would have to buy them from Prairie or have them shipped to us. They would make oil out of the inside of the cottonseed, and you could buy the cottonseed hulls.

BM: Now, I understand that cottonseed oil was a fairly recent development. Do you have any idea how old you were. . . .

NM: When they started making cottonseed oil? I imagine that the first time we had ever heard of cottonseed oil, I was ten or twelve years old. People couldn't do a thing with the cottonseed. They'd feed it to the stock, but the cows wouldn't eat much of it because they couldn't. I didn't know at that time the reason they couldn't, but the inside of the cottonseed is not good for stock. That's what we used to feed our cows through the winter. We couldn't give them but about two palms full. But when those oil mills started and they got to taking the seed and paying more for them, people quit feeding them to the cows and they fed the hulls instead.

BM: After the cottonseed oil places got started, did that change, too, where you did your ginning?

NM: Yes, it did change. We started taking it to Prairie. That was over there at the railroad. You see, they had a railroad there, and they could ship that seed on into the cotton mill, I mean the oil mills.

BM: When you shipped the seed to the oil mill, did you do your ginning at Prairie?

NM: Yes, that's when they quit having these gins out in the country. Everybody was carrying their cotton over to Prairie or to Aberdeen which was quite a ways farther. If we were going to do trading in Aberdeen, a lot of times my father would just take his cotton there. He could get his cotton ginned, sell it and sell the seed, too. We couldn't sell seeds there until I was about ten or twelve years old, though.

BM: Do you remember where your father took his cotton before?

NM: Yes, he took it to the gins in the country around here. We had one out at Una, that little town that's mentioned in the book there. They carried the cotton to Una and had it ginned.

BM: Did the people that did your ginning market the cotton for you?

NM: They just ginned it. All they did was gin your cotton and pack it

into a bale. The gin was equipped to gin your cotton, pack it down, and put the wrapping on the outside. Then we would bring it home. When we got ready to go to sell the cotton, we usually waited until we got it all ginned and sat it out in the yard or wherever we were going to put it. Sometimes you could carry six bales on one wagon, just stack them. They weren't all that heavy. Five or six hundred pound was what the average bale of cotton would weigh.

BM: Now, the people who were sharecropping, they didn't have their cotton separated, did they? It was all together?

NM: No, they kept theirs separate. You see, they was supposed to get half of the cotton. My father always kept their cotton bales separate and when he sold their cotton, they got half of what it brought.

BM: I see. But when you went to the gin for ginning, would the sharecroppers' cotton go at the same time?

NM: Oh, yes. My father had to take it because he had the teams to carry it. He always had to carry their cotton and have it ginned. That was in the contract, you know. You had to get it ginned and get it ready to sell. But when you sold it, that was the time they called the "settling." You had to get all of the cotton sold and all of the corn in the crib, then they got a half of the cotton and a third of the corn. They either sold their third of the corn or kept some of it to make cornmeal. If they had some chickens or a hog or something, they'd want to keep their third of the corn. If they wanted to sell it, my father would buy their corn back, and pay them market price.

BM: Did all of the corn that was harvested go to a gristmill for grinding?

NM: Oh, no, we just put it in a crib. We had a regular house that we stored the corn in. That fed our hogs and chickens and made our meal. We always tried to have enough to last until the next gathering time. Sometimes we might not have enough and we'd have to go and buy some.

BM: Would you have some ground as you needed it?

NM: We had a gristmill about a mile from where we lived. Every Saturday the owner would grind the meal for everyone in the neighborhood. Sometimes he would have one day in the middle of the week when he would grind corn, and we would all take our corn there to have it ground for our meal. We did that for years and years and years and years. I guess we did it as long as we farmed. We always had our own meal.

BM: Did the sharecroppers keep their corn separate?

NM: Yes, they kept their corn separate. If they wanted to keep some, my father would let them do whatever they wanted to do with that third of the corn. It was theirs to do what they wanted to do with it. If they wanted to sell some of it, that was all right; if they wanted to keep it, why, they would keep some of it.

BM: Did blacks and whites grind corn at the same gristmill?

NM: Yes, they'd go to the same place. There wasn't any difference in that. Everybody went to the same place and had it ground.  
(laughter)

The man that had the mill charged a certain percent of the corn. You would pour your corn into a container and he would measure to see how much you had. Then he would take out his part for the grinding. He took a certain percent of the corn. I can't remember how much he took out. Then he'd grind the rest for you. As a rule, we always tried to take about a bushel. It would take a bushel of corn to make enough meal to last a week. We had dogs and things like that that we fed the corn bread to. So we always took about a bushel of corn every week and had it ground. That would make our meal for the next week. We'd have to go to the mill about once a week. Every Saturday was "mill day," as we would call it. Most everybody would have to go. Sometimes he would have to have two days because he couldn't grind for everyone in one day. There would be just too many people.

BM: Do you mean the whole community would go to the mill on Saturday?

NM: Yes, the whole community.

BM: Did they use the expression "We're going to mill?"

NM: Yes, everyone said, "We're going to mill today. Today is the day to go to mill." Everyone knew that someone in the family would have to go. Usually, if all the sharecroppers had to go, we would have to hitch the wagon up because there would be seven or eight. Everybody would have their sack of corn to be ground into meal.

BM: Then I suppose your father would take a wagon. Would each of the sharecroppers go along, too?

NM: Yes. One or two sharecroppers would take the wagon. Sometimes some of the children would want to go and just ride, just to be going, to have a good time on the wagon. That was a treat sometimes, especially for the boys. The girls didn't go, of course. Usually one or two of the sharecroppers would hitch up the wagon, and everybody would have their corn ready to bring up to the house. Then they'd take it and have it ground.

BM: You told me when I talked to you before that your father would rather have sharecroppers than tenant farmers. I wonder if you'd explain that.

- NM: Well, tenant farmers, they were usually what we called "white trash." I wouldn't say that they were "white trash," but they usually weren't the class of people that you wanted to associate with or your children to associate with. My father was always kind of particular. He would tell us children, "If you can't go with the good people, don't go with the sorry people, the trashy people." (laughter) He wouldn't let us associate with them. If he had them on his place, he would have to associate with them. He said he would just rather have the colored people because when they came to your house, you didn't have to ask them in and entertain them. The colored people didn't expect it. He said, "You couldn't handle the white people; they was on an equal with you." You understand how that would be.
- BM: So it was always colored people that he used for sharecropping. I mean, there was no mixture of peoples?
- NM: Oh, no, no. The sharecroppers were never mixed with the white people.
- BM: Were the sharecroppers on each farm always of one race?
- NM: Yes, mostly. There were some white sharecroppers that weren't trashy people. They just never seemed to accumulate anything and couldn't get ahead. They would go and sharecrop with a person that didn't have any colored people. Do you understand? They didn't mix. If the white sharecropper wanted to sharecrop, he went and tried to find a person that didn't have any colored families on his place, because it just didn't do for the white families and colored families to live on the same place as equals. My son doesn't understand that a whole lot. But when you are raised with it, you know it just didn't work. Those colored people resented the white people, and the white people resented the colored people. They wouldn't work together.
- BM: So, more often than not, the tenant farmers would usually be white and the sharecroppers were usually black or colored. It might vary, and usually if it varied, they didn't work together in the same situation.
- NM: That's right. No, they didn't work together. Maybe there was one person who didn't have any other tenant farmers on his place, or sharecroppers either, and maybe he had an empty house and some land he wanted to rent out. And he would rent this to these tenant farmers. But, you see, the tenant farmer just didn't want to work with colored people, and he didn't want to live on the same place with them. He felt like he was a little bit better than the colored people. We never had any trouble like that. There just weren't too many of those kind of people in that neighborhood.
- BM: In the area that you lived in, do you have any idea whether a large proportion of the population was colored, or was it white?



NM: Well, I expect we had more colored people because there were more colored families to work the land. There weren't too many white people. When they were raising cotton, the colored people were in demand, you see. But after they quit raising cotton, then people left. You can just go out through the country and see those houses where the colored people lived, the sharecroppers lived. They're already falling down. You can just look at them and tell, "Well, sharecroppers lived on that place." You can see where they had a lot of houses and barns, too, out in the same area, and you know that they had sharecroppers there to work the land.

BM: In your father's case, your land was right with your house, wasn't it?

NM: Well, yes.

BM: I mean, your living place was not separate from where the farm operation was?

NM: Yes, it was. Where we lived, my father didn't farm that place much. He had his cattle there at the house and in his pasture where the house was. We farmed across the road, over on that other 160 acres.

BM: That was across the road?

NM: Yes.

BM: But it wasn't very far away, though?

NM: Oh, no. It wasn't far. It was just across the road.

BM: I'm wondering about the other people who lived in Belle. Did some of the people who lived in Belle have property some distance away?

NM: No. The people right down east of us had 160 acres, I believe, too. But they had a big family of boys, and they didn't have any sharecroppers or tenant farmers. They worked their ground, but there were several people who lived not too far from where we lived, and they had sharecroppers. They didn't have but two or three on their place, maybe one or two families on their place. It depended on how much acreage they had. They had to have enough acreage for a person to have at least fifteen acres, I believe, is what they considered for one man. If he didn't have very much help, he couldn't farm much more than fifteen acres.

BM: If he had acreage beyond that, he needed somebody to help?

NM: Yes, he needed more. Sometimes they would get out and rent some land from another person. If this person was living on this other place and he didn't have enough land, he would go and rent some land, from another man who had some extra acreage that he wasn't using. That's the way they did a lot of times.

BM: In your father's case, did he mainly spend his time running the store while the sharecroppers were taking care of the crop? What did your father spend his time doing during the day?

NM: Well, usually he had to see that the sharecroppers were working the land. He rode his horse most of the time, all over the farm from one place to the other. With colored people you had to tell them what to do, and then go and show them a lot of times because they just didn't know, or didn't want to do it. I don't know what it was. He would have to tell them, "I want you to plow a certain place." He would almost have to go over there and stay there until they got started. Then he'd have to go and see that another family was straightened out. It kept him pretty busy during the working season.

BM: So, he was actually active in operating his farm in a supervisory way.

NM: Yes, he was. You had to be active because you couldn't just sit down and depend on them to work. They depended on you to tell them and show them what you wanted to do. There were some of them that you could tell them what you wanted to do, how you wanted it done, and they would go on and, maybe, do it, but all of them weren't like that. There were just a few of them that you could depend on like that. He really had to stay with them to get them to work. A lot of times they would go over to the field to work. He would think that they were working, and they would be sitting under the shade tree. (laughter) Of course, he would get kind of aggravated with them. But if they thought he wasn't coming around, they could really play tricks on him.

BM: As a little girl, did you ever go out and ride around in the fields with your father?

NM: We usually helped out daddy. Yes, I would go with him a lot of times when he went in the buggy. We had a little crop of our own. My brother could help with the farming, so my dad always gave him a patch, and we would help him with it. We would chop the cotton and chop the corn. We didn't have much, but we would have some. We'd also help our mother. We always had canning to do and gardening to do and there was something to do all the time. We had to milk the cows and we had to feed the pigs. We just had one brother who was older than I, and my other brothers was younger. My mother always said that my daddy made boys out of the girls because he didn't have any boys to go along with him--just that one. I had four older sisters than I. My oldest sister stayed in the store; she didn't go and help us in the fields and all that we had to do. There were so many things to do; everybody had to work. There wasn't much playtime. Of course, we had a lot of time to play, too, but we had so many things to be doing.

NM: Did your sister run that store all by herself?

- NM: My father helped her, of course, but she stayed in the store all the time when he was out. He would take over late in the afternoon, though, when they'd bring in the teams from the fields. He'd see that everybody had brought in the teams and put them into the barn, and everything. Then he would go and take over the store and let my sister come to the house.
- BM: When she was in school, I suppose he ran the store.
- NM: She had finished school in Houston when we bought the store. My dad didn't buy the store when we first went to Clay County. It was two or three years later. I guess she was close to eighteen when she finished school in Houston, and she came home and stayed in the store.
- BM: Was she attending a private school in Houston?
- NM: No. She stayed with an aunt. We had some relatives up there. We didn't have a high school close to. . .just a grade school. They let her stay with them and go to Houston School. I went to school in Houston one year; I stayed with my relatives up there. You see, we just had a five-month school, so we didn't get much schooling. After we went as far as the eighth grade, there wasn't much further that you could go in a country school. Eighth grade was about as far as you could go. Well, we didn't have grades, but now it would be considered the eighth grade. And if you wanted to go. . . . I had one sister that came down to West Point. We had some relatives down here, and she finished school down here in West Point. She taught school for years, until she retired.
- BM: I want to ask you about your lighting when you were a little girl. What kind of lamps did you have?
- NM: Oh, you see that lamp? That's an Alladin lamp, but we didn't get that for years. I've got an oil lamp; that's what we had. I had the Alladin lamp made over into an electric light. That had a mantle and a chimney. We thought we were really getting something when we had an Alladin lamp.
- BM: About when did you get that?
- NM: My husband bought that when our two oldest children were almost grown. They always talked about what a good light it was for them to study by. I imagine it was along 1925 or 1930 before we ever got one of those lamps. We got the first one we saw, the first one we had ever seen. My husband bought it over at Prairie, at that little store over there. We really thought we had a good light. There weren't too many people who had those Alladin lamps. (laughter)
- BM: Back as early as you can remember, did your mother and dad have the lamp with the chimney, a kerosene lamp?
- NM: Yes, that's all we had—kerosene lamps, and candles, too.

We had candles, but we didn't use them much. But we had lanterns. Whenever we went out to the barn at night, we had to light that lantern and take it with us. You know what a lantern looks like. It has a handle on it and a chimney which sits on a bowl, sort of, and they burned off kerosene. We had to have a light if we went to the barn or went out anywhere at night, so we had a lantern.

We had a lamp that hung up on the wall with a reflector behind it. Those were good lamps. We had one in our kitchen where we could put it up on the wall over the table, and then the lamp wouldn't have to sit on the table. You see, there was so much danger of the chimney getting knocked off in passing the food over the table. We just had a table that would seat about twelve or fourteen people. Four could sit on each side and two at each end--that would be about twelve; that's how long our eating table was! (laughter) We had two of those reflector lamps on the wall. They were really nice. My mother had those, and I had one after I married because we didn't have electricity. It was in the 1930s before we ever had electricity out in that county up there.

BM: Did you have silverware for everyday use and silverware for good?

NM: (laughter) Well, no. We didn't have good silverware, but we had the other kind of silverware. My mother and daddy had so many children, I don't think they could have kept up with it. She did have some silverware, but she never did keep it separate. We just used it for everyday. We had some dishes that my mother saved for special occasions because she didn't want the children to break those dishes. But she used that pitcher all the time. We called that the Poke pitcher because my daddy bought it. Mr. Poke was selling his household goods and my daddy bought a lot of dishes and that pitcher. Oh, he bought a lot of things from that sale. We always called it the Poke pitcher.

BM: You're talking about an ironstone pitcher that is sitting here on your living room table. It has an ironstone plate with it. Did you keep that pitcher in your bedroom?

NM: It was in the kitchen.

BM: Did you use it for water?

NM: That's what we used to put milk in. My mother would keep the buttermilk in it. She would put it on the table and pour milk out for the children. That pitcher was on the table almost all the time. I was seven or eight years old when my daddy bought those dishes and brought them home. That's the only piece we've got left.

BM: Oh, was it a whole set of ironstone dishes?

NM: Oh, yes, he bought a boxful of dishes and kitchen utensils. There was a lot of dishes; that pitcher, though, is the only thing that

we kept down through the years. My sister had that and she lived down in the southern part of the state of Mississippi. She died four or five years ago. When my mother died, my sister carried that pitcher home with her. She said she wanted to keep it. She told me before she died--she was sick a long time with cancer--she said, "I want you to take that pitcher and take care of it. That pitcher has been in the family all this time, and I don't want it to get out of the family." So, I've already told my daughter--I just have the one daughter--she'd already got her name on it, if it doesn't get broke. I hope it doesn't.

BM: You mentioned that your water supply for the house was a cistern water supply.

NM: Yes, we had to draw it up in buckets, you know.

BM: Was it an open well?

NM: Yes, it was open well; that's all we had. My father had a bored well though; we called it a bored well because it was a pump, you see. Pumped it out of the ground.

BM: Was that two separate places?

NM: No, that was at the place he bought, but it was several years after we moved there.

BM: Oh, I see.

NM: That he had the bored well.

BM: Oh, but originally, you had the cistern?

NM: We used the cistern water until he had that well bored. I guess it was about 1910, I imagine it was. I know I was fifteen or sixteen years old when he did that, more than that I imagine. Now that water is soft. That bored well is just like all these other bored pump wells as we call them, but we had to pump by hand. My father did buy a motor and put on it after I was married so we wouldn't have to do it by hand, so my mother wouldn't have to. She never had water in the house all of her life because that was one of things, I guess, people in the country didn't do. They didn't know about it.

BM: Do you know if the water was softer because it was deeper?

NM: You had to go below the lime rock to get that soft water.

BM: Do you remember ever going to the Tombigbee River and crossing when you were a little girl?

NM: Crossing? No. We never went to the Tombigbee River until we moved to West Point. You see, it goes across over here to Columbus. We

didn't go across Tombigbee until we moved down here in 1939, I believe it was. We moved from up there in Clay County.

BM: That's after you were married?

NM: Oh, yes. I had grown children. One of them was married when we came down here; my oldest son was married. He's sixty-five now, and my daughter is sixty-two. She had finished high school, and had taken a business course in Memphis, and was working down here in West Point when we moved down here.

BM: I think I will save some more questions until next time I see you. I do appreciate the time you spent today.

NM: Well, you're just welcome; I enjoyed it. I don't mind talking about it. (laughter) I guess I remember old times better than I do a lot of the other times.

BM: Oh, it's been fun; thank you very much.

NM: You're welcome, just call me when you get ready to come back. I'd rather you'd wait until the weekends because I'm not doing anything then. I'm usually sewing or doing something on weekdays. I make all of my clothes. In fact, I've made six shirts for my son since Christmas.

BM: Oh, my. (laughter)

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 121  
An interview with  
Douglas Ivy

conducted and edited by  
James M. McClurken



Douglas Ivy was born in the community of Waverly, Mississippi in 1899. He has farmed in the area all of his life, sharecropping until he was able to purchase his own land in 1944. The emphasis of Mr. Ivy's interview is on the changes that he has seen. He deals with life as a sharecropper, the construction and quality of homes that sharecroppers lived in, the equity of the sharecropping system, and their general quality of life. He also provides information of hunting and fishing, entertainment and athletic activities, river transportation and local churches.

The interview with Mr. Ivy was conducted in his home by James McClurken on February 18, 1980.

M: This is an interview with Mr. Douglas Ivy for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by James M. McClurken. The interview is taking place in his home on February 19, 1980. Mr. Ivy's address is Route 2, Box 232, West Point, Mississippi 39773. His telephone number is 494-6747.

Mr. Ivy, I'd like to begin by asking you what year you were born in?

I: 1899.

M: Were you born near your present home?

I: Right across the road, about a hundred and fifty yards from where I'm living now.

M: What place were you born?

I: Well, I was born on the old Lee Hill place. I bought that recently; in about 1944 I bought it. I was born on it in 1899.

M: Was the Lee Hill place right across the Waverly Road?

I: Right.

M: When did your parents come to this region?

I: I don't believe I know the year that my dad came into this part of the country. I lived there until I was four years old, then I moved into the bottom that we called the Billy Young place. I was about four years old when I left the Lee Hill place and we moved over to Young's Bottom. I can't remember that year, but it was about four years from 1899. I don't remember the number of years that I stayed on the Billy Young place, but I do know that we moved out of there and moved back to the Lee place in 1944 when I bought this place.

M: What kind of work did your father do?

I: He was a farmer.

M: Can you tell me what it was like to grow up the son of a farmer in this area?

I: About what kind of farming he did?

M: Yes.

I: Well, he didn't raise anything but, cotton, and corn, and watermelon, peanuts, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and all that kind of stuff. That was his daily work, tending to that kind of stuff. In that day, we



was raising sugarcane, too. We had these horse mills where we'd grind the cane up and cook it into molasses. Sugarcane, we raised that kind, called it sugarcane. It'd grow like corn, grow up and be in a small stalk. It don't grow tall like corn.

M: Did you help in the fields when you were a boy?

I: Why, sure. That is all I did. When I got big enough to work, he put me to work.

M: How big was big enough?

I: Well, you'd go to work at about eight or nine years old. That's when you could do something. They would put you to work before that, but you'd be where you could finally fill a place when you got around eight or nine years old.

M: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I: I had three brothers and one sister.

M: Did you all work?

I: Right.

M: What was your house like when you were a boy? What was the first place that you lived in like?

I: What kind of house it was?

M: Yes.

I: Well, it was a log house. They are coming back in style now, I believe. I see some of them that are being built now. It was a house that my dad and all of his type would go into the woods, and cut down trees to build. They had an axe that you call a broadaxe. You chopped into that wood on two sides, made two sides smooth, and then slotted the ends of it to where it will fit together just that way, making that wall go up to where they put the top on it. They would take clay mud, and daub all where those logs connect.

M: Did the house have two rooms or one room?

I: You could make as many as you needed, but usually you would have two rooms.

M: Did it have a hallway in the middle of it that was open?

I: Right, sometimes they would have a hallway in the middle.

M: Did the one that you lived in have that hallway?

I: That's right. It had an eight-foot hall. It wasn't a hall like

this that we have now. The room on one side would come up so far, and then the next room would be over yonder, eight feet from this room. This hallway would just go straight through. The rooms would come within eight feet of one another and all that space was just a floor with a top over it. That would be the porch; they'd call it the porch.

M: Why did they put that hallway like that?

I: Well, that's the question. I don't know. It was just all they knew about how to make a place for relaxing, to get out from the house, get out somewhere to sit down, have a relax place. That's the way they'd fix it.

M: Did it have two fireplaces on it?

I: Right. Well, it would have been a stack chimney. They wasn't building a brick chimney then. This would be a mud chimney, out of mud and sticks. They'd stick them sticks together and carry it up to the shape of a chimney. It would be just like the brick chimney but there wouldn't be a brick in it, wouldn't be nothing but mud.

M: Did your mother cook over the fireplace?

I: That's right.

M: What was the fireplace like? Was there a metal bar across it?

I: There wasn't no bar at all. It was just a fireplace. It had some things that, in that day, they called the dog irons. That was to hold the wood in the fireplace, to keep it from falling back out of the hearth on the floor. The dog irons sat up. You'd put the wood over in there, and it couldn't get out and come back on the hearth or on the floor. Them irons would hold it in the fireplace.

M: How did your mother sit her pans on the fire?

I: Well, when that fire was getting to burn good, they'd pull them coals out on the hearth. They had a brick hearth on the front of the fireplace. They'd pull them coals out on the fireplace, and cook right there on them coals. To make corn bread, they would let the fire burn down low, mix meal up with hot water, roll it together that way, take the shovel and rake them ashes back, and put it right in the fire. Then you take ashes, put them over the batter, and put hot coals over the ashes, cook it. They called it ashcake.

M: Was that good stuff?

I: What are you talking about. That bread will make you eat up your tongue. We called it ashcake. When that bread gets good and done, they would take it out of the fire, get them some clean water, and wash all the ashes off, down just as clean. They laid it down in front of the fire and let the water dry off it again, and that bread

would be ready. We'd break it then and go to eating. It's called ashcake.

M: Didn't your mother use bread pans at all?

I: Not much.

M: What kind of dishes did she have?

I: We'd have tin plates; tin pans we called them. There wasn't this kind of plate ceramic, not then. They'd be tin plates, made out of tin.

M: Were they white?

I: No, they'd be brown and just in the tin color. They'd be different colors, but they would be tin plates. You could drop it and pick it up. You see, these plates, if you drop it, you couldn't pick it up no more. But these plates BLAMLAIM, you pick it up and go right on. It was ready for the next time. You couldn't break one of them because they were tin.

M: Did you have silverware in the house?

I: No, there wasn't nothing like that.

M: What did your mother stir her soups with?

I: She had a great, big, old spoon, these bread spoons we called them in that day. Then they had paddles that they would pat the ashcake with, big, old, wide things that they'd level it off and cover it over with. The first ashes that you would put over ashcake it would be fine ashes with no coals in it much. After they'd get it covered, they would put bigger coals that would be warmer on top of that. Oh that's just amusing to look at, to see what the people used to do and what they're gone and doing now.

M: What other kinds of things did you do back then that you don't do now?

I: Well, I'll tell you, there ain't hardly nothing but eating that I do now like I did back there. Everything has changed. I only know one thing, and that is eating. We'd eat back then; we eat now, but our way of eating is all different.

M: Did you have a kitchen table?

I: No, no. We would eat anywhere, just wherever we could get a place to sit down. That's where we'd eat.

M: Did you have beds?

I: Yeah, we had beds.

M: What kind of bed did you have?

I: Well, some of them would be these old, old wooden beds. Some of them would be these old cots, made flat. Most of the children, more or less, would sleep on the floor. They didn't want no beds; they'd sleep on the floor.

M: Did you sleep on a blanket?

I: Well, they would have hay for their tick. See, we'd send the children out there in the field when the hay was tall and thick, and make them pull the hay to make the tick out of. They'd get the cloth, and they would get enough hay to put in that tick, and then they sew it up. They'd throw that tick and a quilt down on the floor. You'd get down there and sleep on to heaven.

M: Did your mother make quilts?

I: Oh, yeah. We always had them. That's what they don't do now. They made the cover over it. They made cut-overs, but you don't find much of that now.

M: Did she make quilts with a lot of bright patterns in them? Did she use little pieces of cloth and sew them together in different patterns?

I: Well, they did. Mostly they made these blocks, and made these blocks into quilts. When it'd come to making a garment for themselves, they'd have some kind of old bag and they'd make it into whatever the style was. They were wearing their dresses dragging the ground and all that kind of stuff. I see them going into that again, now. You see, one time, they had them half-way up their thigh. It was the style. Now they come to their knees, then they come below their knees. Now, in the days we're living in they're wearing them down to their ankles again. That is just the way that time develops things.

M: What kind of things do you remember doing when you were a boy, for fun?

I: Well, we used to play ball, go in swimming, just different little things that was there for a boy to do. We always was mighty swift on playing ball when boys were big enough to play, play ball and we'd get together and go off to the river someplace to swim. We'd do all kinds of stuff like that. Our amusement was to do that, and more stuff was running horses and mules. We'd do a lot of that to see who had the horse that could run or trot the fastest, or could side pace the fastest, or who could outrun the other one on a horse.

M: Did you have a regular racetrack?

I: No, we didn't have nothing like that. The road was our racetrack. Sometimes there would be a bunch of us on there, come in and meet a

bunch and just race. We'd just have switches whipping the horses and seeing who could run fastest. When we'd meet a bunch coming from the other way that done the same thing, we'd have to slow up or we would run into each other with mules and horses. It was just amusing to look at what I have done. Now you have to watch the fellow with the car. If you're driving, you've got to watch yourself and for him, too. Then, you see, there wasn't no such thing as a car, just mules and horses. That was the way that you got over walking. When you'd leave walking, you'd get a mule or get you a horse and ride. It was just another day, another day.

M: Did you go fishing when you were a boy?

I: Sure, I always did a little fishing until I got to be old like I am now. I don't care about it now, but I always loved fishing.

M: What did you use to catch the fish with, just a hook and line?

I: That's right, catch them with a hook and line. We'd go dig our bait. We'd dig that old earthworm and go out there to some lake or another. There wasn't no lakes then, much; there wasn't nothing but sloughs and the river. There wasn't no lakes because people hadn't come up to that, then. These lakes came in at a later date than the day that I am talking about.

M: What kind of fish did you go after?

I: What we'd more or less catch was catfish and this fish that you call a grennel. That's next of kin to a snake, they say. That was the old slough fish, grennel fish. They are big, kind of like perches. There is another fish that they call the sucker. All of those grow in the slough part of the water. You go to the river to get cats.

M: Did you go out in boats?

I: Oh, yeah, we always had these paddle boats which they made out here every since I was born. My daddy used to fish on the river in a boat. He would go out there, get in that boat, and run his troutline. He had a troutline that'd go from this bank, sometimes across to the other bank. They'd have weights on that line to hold it down in the water when they got in the middle of the river. He'd get in that boat, grab the side of that line, and just pull himself across, trailing that line on. Everywhere that he done caught a fish, he'd raise them up, take them off and put them in his boat.

M: How many hooks did a line have?

I: Oh, Lord. A troutline. . . . They did have them all the way across the river, from where it would go into the water on this bank clean on over there. They'd be about that far apart.

M: About two feet, two-and-a-half feet?

I: Something like that. They would be about that distance all the way.

It'd take some to bait one line if it was a troutline. There is another way you fish. That's where one hook would be tied to a limb or something that would hang out over the river. That's a set hook. This other would be a troutline. It would go across the river. You could get in your boat, and you would pull that line follow it all the way across. If it has got a fish. . . . Them that ain't got none, you just pass it up and drop the hook back in. The next time you try and run it, you may have caught one. So that is the way we did it.

M: How often did you go fishing?

I: Whenever we wasn't working. That would be the fish time, when we didn't have anything to do.

M: Did you work six days a week?

I: Well, no. We didn't hardly work on Saturday on the farm, unless grass was about to take the crop. You know that it would be in a bad rainy year when the grass was about to take the crop. We'd work everyday then trying to get that grass out of the cotton and stuff.

M: So, you went to town on Saturdays sometimes?

I: We'd go to town enough to know what time it was, but we didn't know much about no town.

M: Was Waverly your town?

I: No, Waverly never has been a town. It was just really a name, Waverly, but Columbus and West Point were the towns for Waverly. It's got a good name, and it is now coming to be more of a recognized place with thickness and with business. There has never been, and there is going to be. There's going to be a recreation center there. That's going to be a big thing, I think. That's going to cover forty acres.

M: Do you remember when the steamboats came up the river?

I: Yeah, I can remember that. There were little old boats, but I can remember steamboats running the river. They wasn't nothing much. These boats today are low boats, but they are fixing this river now to put big boats back in. They are widening this river. They're going to make this river about 30 feet wider than it was, Tombigbee down here.

M: Did you ever ride on one of those steamboats?

I: No, I wasn't big enough. I'd just go to the river and see them. I never did ride on one.

M: How did those boats run? What were they powered by?

I: They were run by steam.

M: Did they have a big paddle wheel on them?

I: No. They had some kind of a operate-up-and-down under the boat. Some kind of thing was under there, I don't know just how they were fixed but all that forced it was underneath. You couldn't see nothing but the boat on top of the water, going. All that powered it was under the water.

M: What did they come up here for? Did they pick up cargoes or bring you things?

I: Oh, yeah. You'd go to the river and pick up things just like you're going to town, pick up whatever you want from the boat. They had everything on there that you would want. They had places that they'd stop. It would be kind of like a station place where it would stop, and you'd go there and wait for it. You could hear it blowing way before it'd get to you. It would come on in, pull up there, and we'd be standing there. They supplied their wants off the boat.

M: Was that the same way in your father's time?

I: That's right. This is a little river now. I reckon there might be twenty or thirty feet of water on each side of the Waverly trestle when the river is down low. They wouldn't run a boat any larger than could go to the side of this bridge because it's got a big pillar right in the middle to hold the track up. Boats would have to go on this side or that side to pass the bridge. But if the boat was tall enough, he couldn't get under the trestle. They would have to turn that trestle. They had a way that you could unconnect that trestle and could turn that straight up and down the river. One each side of the pillar there wouldn't be nothing to hinder the boatmen going under it. See, you couldn't go under the trestle, but when the boat was coming, you'd have to turn that trestle to get by there. I've been down there where that railroad trestle is straight up and down the river so the boats could go on one side of it or the other.

M: Do you remember the names of any of those boats?

I: Can't remember that, if they had names. I imagine they had names; I just can't remember what their names were.

M: Do you know how long ago the last one came through here?

I: Well, I'll tell you, it has been years since the boats were finally cut out. The river got so the trees were falling in it so much that it hindered the progress of boat traveling. That underwater stuff that carried the boat would hit trees that would fall from this side or that side of in the river. They just wasn't keeping the river clear enough to run them; they had to stop. The bank would cave and a tree would fall in the river. It'd go down in there and some of those operating of the boat would get tangled up on those logs.

That was the delay. When you run into a tree that fell in the river, that underwater stuff would hit it. Sometimes the boat would be up the river hollering. He couldn't get by.

M: Did they ever use barges after they stopped running the steamboats? Flatboats?

I: Yeah, I remember them. They didn't do too much running of them. They run them some, but not too much.

M: You mentioned that you played baseball a lot.

I: I did.

M: Where did the other teams come from?

I: Well, we'd make teams up from the different part of the county. You see, we was called the Waverly team. There was a team called the Prairie team, and the Whites Station team, and the West Point Players, and the Columbus Players. They'd be named for something, and we would just meet one another and see who could beat. They'd be named different things from different parts of the county.

M: I see, so, you played people from all over.

I: That's right. Sometimes we'd have four or five different teams to play. We'd have so long to play a game. When it would be over, two more teams would take over on the same diamond. You had to fix a place to play ball, just like they do now. Course, it wasn't so much of a fix as they have now. They have a blacktop or cement where they play now.

M: Did the churches ever have ball teams?

I: No, a church wouldn't think about that in those days. Church was a church then. It ain't much now to what it used to be. It does lots of things now that churches wouldn't think about doing then. I was in Birmingham; I think it was in October of last year. I went to a church there where they got a football room, headstart, and I don't know what all they don't have inside that church. Of course, it ain't in the church part, but the church is so big that all that is included.

M: What church did you attend when you were young?

I: Mt. Pisgah. That's the same church up here by name, but it was sitting on the Waverly Sandy-land Road. We moved it from up there and built a brick church down here, the church that you passed right up there.

M: What's the name of that road that the church was moved from?

I: That's called the Sandy-land Road, and there's another one up there



called the Prairie Road. There are two roads going to West Point, the Sandy-land Road and the Prairie Road. This was the Sandy-land Road that turns right there by my house. That church set right up there a quarter of a mile. We decided to move it down here.

M: Did you go to church all day long or did you just go once a day?

I: Well, we went to church one time for that day and then we'd go back that night. We wouldn't stay there all day. We'd just stay there for the day service, and then come home for dinner and relax and whatever and go back to church that night.

M: Did you like going to church when you were a kid?

I: I've always been crazy about church, and still am today. I think well of a church.

M: Did you have a full-time preacher or did you have a circuit preacher?

I: Well, I wouldn't call him a full-time preacher. We never have had a full-time preacher because that calls for every Sunday. We'd have a part-time preacher about two Sundays in a month; that would be our method. At one time, I remember, we had preaching just one Sunday in a month. That was our day for our service, every first Sunday.

M: Did you ever have dinners at the church?

I: Yeah, we'd have that there sometimes.

M: How many members did your church have when you were young?

I: Oh, there was around three hundred at one time, three hundred and more.

M: That's a very large congregation.

I: Yes, it was.

M: Was your old church building as big as your new one?

I: Well, they were about the same size, only the old church was a frame church and this is a brick church.

M: I see. What did the inside of the old church look like?

I: Well, it was sealed alright. It was a frame church, but it was weatherboarded on the outside and sealed on the inside. It was sealed with lumber. Some of the inside sealing was four inches wide, and some of it was six inches wide. There wasn't no such a thing as paneling. This was lumber that would have a trench cut in it, and it would lock together in that trench. That would be lumber, but it's called "seal." The loft would be the same way, sealed with lumber. In that day, you could put this lumber down the wall and

across the top. It would all have a slot cut in one side of that lumber. The other piece would be cut to fit the slot and you'd rive it up so it would be airtight. It was just airtight; you couldn't get no air.

M: Who built that church? Did the men from your community do it?

I: No, that was built by old man Chapman. He lived in Columbus town, Columbus settlement, an old colony. Old man Chapman built that church.

M: Was there a church before that one?

I: That's right, a brush arbor.

M: And where was that?

I: It wasn't far from the frame church.

M: And you called that a brush arbor?

I: That's what it was. It wasn't plank or anything. It was just covered up with brush and pine toppings, covered so it wouldn't rain in it. All that would be the overhead of it. There'd be a wall made out of logs--like I was talking about--the walls would be up to a certain height where the logs joined, they'd take clay mud and daub the outside so air couldn't get through between the logs.

M: Did you go there when you were a boy?

I: I wasn't big enough to go to that. They never did carry me to that brush arbor church, but I remember it alright now. When I was a boy I'd go up there and look at it, but there wasn't no church inside. My dad was attending when they got rid of that brush arbor church and built a frame church. We wore that one out up there and then we built us a brick church.

M: Have you heard any old stories that your father has ever told you about this area?

I: Well, I don't know. I used to hear them sitting around talking about things, but it wasn't nothing much that I was careful with.  
(laughter)

M: Were there any stories about places around here?

I: What do you mean?

M: He didn't tell stories about ghosts or anything about Waverly Mansion, did he?

I: Ghosts?

M: Yeah.

- I: Oh, man, they'd talk on that; that's all the older people believed in. They believed in that more than they did anything. I don't believe in it, but they did.
- M: Did you have somebody in your community who did the doctoring when you got sick?
- I: No, we never did have no community doctor. We always got our treatment from West Point or Columbus. That's where you'd find him. The doctor system was set up in one of the towns, and they'd take you there when you needed a doctor.
- M: There wasn't anybody in the community who knew how to use herbs and plants out of the woods, was there?
- I: Well, there was some. Older people didn't hardly go to no doctor. They'd get the herbs and make their medicine and cure themselves. A lot of them didn't fool with a doctor; I knew a lot of people that wouldn't fool with a doctor.
- M: What kinds of plants did they use?
- I: That's a question I couldn't answer. I wouldn't know what people got, but they knew because they did what they wanted to with it. It's the way it was; God knows. (laughter)
- M: Your mother didn't use any of that on you, did she?
- I: I imagine she did because I didn't have to go to a doctor until about four or five years ago. I never went to a doctor until about five years ago.
- M: You've been in amazingly good health.
- I: Yes, extra good health. About five years ago I made my first visit to a doctor, and I had to have surgery. It wasn't just a sickness; my water stopped. I got where I couldn't pee. Something had to be done.
- M: Did your mother ever buy medicines from the store and bring them home when you had croup or something?
- I: Well, yeah. They had some kind of medicine that they would buy from the druggist, alright. Most of them doctoring on the children just knew how to go out there and get plants, put it in that old pot they boiled it in, and make it. They made the children drink it and they'd get alright. They just knew what to get for them. There are a lot of herbs out there that's all you need, if you know where they are.
- M: When babies were born, were they born in each person's house?
- I: Yeah.

- M: Did they have a midwife who came around to help?
- I: That's the way they was born then, by a midwife. There wasn't no doctor to serve in that kind of condition with a woman. She always would send for a midwife.
- M: So, you had one down here at Waverly?
- I: Yeah, there's lots of midwives around in there; there wasn't just one. If you couldn't get one, you could get the other one. There was plenty of them in that day.
- M: So, when the babies were born, did they stay with the mother for a little while?
- I: Little while, that's right. Like if it was born tonight, they'd probably stay around today, and probably, part of the night before they're gone. If you need them, why let them know and they'd come back. Whatever happened they'd take care of it. Some of the time they'd go on and you wouldn't need them no more.
- M: How did you pay the midwives?
- I: Well, they paid them a minimum. Some paid them five dollars, sometimes six dollars, seven dollars, whatever.
- M: So, you paid them in money?
- I: Yeah, that's right. Some of them didn't pay them nothing. See, there has always been some people that beat them. Midwives waited on them and they didn't have no way of making some people pay them, at that time. They were just offhand doctors, you know, doctor women; there wouldn't be any men in that. Sometimes they wouldn't get nothing.
- M: Did the women go right back to work after they had their babies?
- I: No, they do more of that now than they did. A woman, at that time, wouldn't think about doing nothing like work them four weeks after they find a baby. Four weeks time they were just secure from work; they wouldn't try to do nothing. Now they don't be off long before they're back on. They don't stay without work too long after they have their baby now. Doctors tell them to go back. He tells them, "You're alright, go on back."
- M: How did your mother wash her clothes?
- I: Well, it was just the old way, just a tub and a washboard thing they had. Men of that day would make your washboard; get a piece of plank and chisel it out with those ridges in it. They'd make the washboard out of a piece of smooth plank. They had those ridges, and the women would get their soap and water, get on that washboard, and they'd scrub until they get those clothes just like they want them.

M: What other kind of things did the men make?

I: Well, there was quite a few things they made, but they couldn't make much pertaining to the farm. The thing they call a sweep stock--that is something to plow your crop with--the men could make them just as good as you could buy them out of the store.

M: So, they made wooden plow sweeps?

I: That's right. They made all that out of timber.

M: What kind of timber did they use?

I: Well, when you come to something like that, they more or less make it out of gum, elm, or something that was tough. An elm tree, you can't hardly split a split off of it and the gum is just the same. These things would be some kind of a locky timber that ain't easy to split off that would stand a whole lot before it would get it to pieces. Plow sweeps would be made out of some of this kind of stable wood.

M: Did you make other tools for around the farm?

I: No, there wasn't anything much you could make unless it was the sweep stock or something like that. These other things, a blacksmith could make them, but nobody couldn't do it out there.

M: Did you have a harness maker in your community?

I: A harness maker? What do you mean? The thing the horses and mules wear?

M: Yes.

I: No, we didn't have that. Harnesses and leather stuff was made by some kind of a factory someplace that knew how to do that.

M: What kind of buggies did you use? Did you use surreys?

I: Well, it used to be that they used buggies; the name of it was a buggy. Then there was another one made the same way, only it was a bigger thing and called surrey. That would have two seats to it and the buggy didn't have but one seat.

M: What kind did you have?

I: I had a buggy; two could ride in it. Four could ride in the surrey, one right behind the other. It was longer. Course, more than that could ride in a buggy but it wasn't comfort seated but for two. If you put more in there, somebody would have to sit in the other one's lap.

M: (laughter) What year did you trade your buggy in for a truck?

I: Well, the first car I bought was a 1924 model Ford. It wasn't a new one, but I bought it. It was a used one when I got it. I imagine it was a 1924 model or something like that. It was a good little old car. Then I bought another one; I bought a 1926 model Ford. They were getting them a little larger then, twenty-five was a little bigger, and twenty-six was a little bigger. As years come, they would make a bigger car, add more to it.

M: What were the roads like when you were a boy?

I: Well, the roads have changed a whole lot with this Highway 50 coming through. As I said before, the way to West Point from Waverly was a sand road. The Waverly Sand Road and the Prairie Road went to West Point; there wasn't but one to go to Columbus. The road right here coming into Waverly, where you come in on Highway 50 here, is in between the Prairie Road and the Sandy-land Road. This highway divided them on the east end, and now it's called to be the road to West Point. Most of Highway 50 used to be called the Prairie Road. That's the change; that's the change in the roads.

M: Did the roads get real muddy?

I: Before they was rocked and blacktopped, sometimes you couldn't get over them. In the wintertime you couldn't get over them in a wagon.

M: Did you have to go to West Point for groceries in the wintertime?

I: That's right.

M: What kind of groceries did you pick up in West Point?

I: Well, there wasn't nothing much that you had to pick up then. People used to raise nearly about what they eat in the day I'm talking about.

M: Did you buy flour?

I: Buy flour, sugar, rice and stuff like that. But when it came to meat and lard and meal they had that at home. All that was at home. You could go to town and get some coffee, or sugar, or flour, or something like that. But the other things you didn't have to go anywhere to get it, you already had it.

M: When did you start plowing in the springtime down here?

I: Well, in the day we're talking about, they started in February. They'd plant corn in March; sometimes they'd have the corn up in March. But now, in the day which we're living, why that's too early. The weather don't get out of the way fast enough to plant that kind of stuff in this part of the country. We get corn in April, now. That's the earliest we need to put it in the ground, at the time we're living in. The weather has moved itself up, that moisture. The plants won't hardly get it up and the cold weather will kill it.

M: How many acres of corn and how many acres of cotton did you put in?

I: Well, in my last farming, before I retired, I was working about sixteen or seventeen acres of cotton. I don't know how much corn. I just planted corn, corn, corn, corn.

M: Did you have a tractor?

I: Never owned one; never owned a tractor in my life. All the farming I done was with mules and horses. That's all I ever used. This lady that I spoke to you about wanted to go over there to see some of these things, that I said I farmed with. Wouldn't nothing do her but for me to go over there to show her that cultivator and them things. I said, "It's setting right where I used to use them." She just wanted to see them. We went over there, and I showed them to her. She was amazed to look at them. A fellow kept on me wanting to buy my mule disc so I sold that. But, the turning plows, and the busters, and the cultivators, and the section harrow, all that's over there where I use it at, and I ain't tickled about selling it. I love to look at it and show it to people that ain't never known that way of farming. I said, "Miss, you'd better come on and ride with me in my truck because that car might get back to the tools and mess up so we can't get from over there. You'll run over there and get in one of those places, mud holes. My truck is so much lighter than the car." I told her, "Baby, you can't get through it; I can go through it." She said, "Oh, I don't mind." So, I said, "I rather risk myself in the places where I know I've got to go than to risk what you've got." So, I left the car sitting right there, and I carried her over there in my truck and showed the tools to her.

M: How many mules did you keep on the place?

I: I had from three to four mules and a horse; I'd, more or less, keep four or five head.

M: Did you keep any cattle?

I: I raised Black Angus cattle. I raised them until I had to retire five years ago. Between four and five years ago was the first that I had any doctor treatment. I had to get a man to see after my cattle while I was in the hospital. When I got out, I wasn't strong enough to chase them and keep up with them. The man just told me, "You ain't going to be able to chase them cows no more. You better sell them." And that's what I done.

M: What was your father's name?

I: Walter Ivy.

M: What was your mother's name?

I: Sophie Ivy.

M: What was your mother's maiden name?

I: I don't know what Sophie was before she married Walter Ivy.

M: Did you ever meet your grandparents?

I: I met my grandmother. That's who practically raised me. My mother didn't raise me. My grandmother raised me.

M: I see.

I: My mother died when I was coming five years old. I lived right off across the road there, in an old log house that sat there. The name of the woman who raised me was Annie; my grandmother's name was Annie. If I could think of her name that would get my mother's first name before she married Ivy. That was her mother.

M: Did she live in the same house with you?

I: Right, she did. She moved in the bottom down on the Banks place with us, and she lived quite a number of years down there. I don't remember how many years she lived after we moved down there.

M: Did you ever know anything about the town of Colbert or Barton or Vinton?

I: Barton Ferry. Why that's the next ferry from here.

M: Did you go up there every once in awhile?

I: Oh, yeah, I crossed at Bartons Ferry more than at Waverly. Bartons ferry and Waverly ferry was the two closest together ferries. See, this right down here is called the Waverly ferry and north of that is the Barton ferry. On down south of the Waverly ferry was the Nashville ferry. That's down below Columbus.

M: Were they all about the same size?

I: Right. They all would carry about two vehicles across the river at a trip. Now, you couldn't put but two things--if it was cars, it carried two, or if it was wagons or buggies, it would carry two. They carried them across and come back and get the other.

M: Did you know any people up at Barton?

I: Not too many. There's a man who used to live right there at the ferry, Dr. Jan Uithoven. They said he was an old Irishman, but he was a good doctor. He lived there, right up on the hill at Barton Ferry.

M: Did he ever deal with you people down here?

I: He did. He doctored all down through here with the people who



fooled with old Doc. He talked a funny language. You couldn't hardly understand what he was talking about. He said, "Promise me Christ youse gonna get better. You take this and do just like doc tell you. Promise me Christ, you're gonna get better; you going to feel some better." He had a funny way that he would express himself. I'd say, "What is he talking about." "You didn't do like Doc told you; you didn't do like I told you. You'd have been some better. You'd been some better if you do like I told you. You gonna be some better; in just a day you gonna be some better." (laughter) He had a funny way, but that old man could do some good doctoring.

M: Did he come down here or did people go up there?

I: He would come whenever you called him, he would come. He was riding in a buggy--no, it was a cart that he used to ride in. That was a two wheel thing. See, a cart ain't got but two wheels, and it's just for one somebody. It has just got one big seat to sit up on and that's what Doc used to ride in. He'd have a big, old, white horse to that cart. That's the way he got around to his patients.

M: When somebody was sick down here at Waverly, how did you get a message up to Doc Uithoven?

I: There wasn't no way but to go after him. There wasn't no telephone in the rural area.

M: Did he give you pills?

I: Biggest he'd give were pills. He was the worst pill doctor that I ever heard of, but he'd do you good. You'd fool with him and he'd sure do you good.

M: Did you call on him very often?

I: They did. Doctor Jan Uithoven, that was the doctor. We called him "Doctor John." He would say, "We be there, we be there, we be there. Soon as I get through eating my supper, we be there. I'm eating my supper now. Soon as get through eating my supper, we be there, we be there." You could hear him way up the road. "Hurry up there, get going!" He'd be switching that horse, switching that horse. "Hurry up there." I'd say, "There come Doc. I hear him up there. He's coming."

M: His horse didn't like to go too well?

I: He kept good going horses; they'd really go. They were rackers and side pacers hitched to that cart. I'd carry on about his business. He lived right at Barton Ferry, Doctor Jan Uithoven.

M: What did his house look like?

I: Well, it was just a common old big frame house, wasn't nothing grand at all. He was a common man, but they said he was just about a millionaire. He had money, money, money.

M: Did he live in a big frame house?

I: That's right.

M: Did it have a front porch on it?

I: Yeah, there was nearly a porch all around it. It was on the front.

M: So, did he live right on the river, right above the ferry?

I: Just up the hill to your left going to the ferry. He lived right up on the hill, on the bank. He lived right at the river, up on the hill to your left going into the ferry.

M: As you're headed east toward Columbus, he lived on the left-hand side of the ferry?

I: That's right.

M: Was his house painted white?

I: That's right.

M: Do you remember how many rooms it had?

I: I can't recall the number rooms it had, but I think it had quite a number.

M: Did it have any big trees out in the yard?

I: He did.

M: A lot of them or just a couple?

I: He had a pretty grove out there in the front. He did have a pretty front there for a shade. People used to like more trees. They're getting back to it now. They don't want a house unless it's in a grove or some kind of a thick place. Most people now want to have a house where they can thin the trees like they want them. They don't hardly want a house that's out in the clear fields. Oh, they will accept it, but they'd rather have one where they could make a grove of it. It keeps the top of your house cool. That's what gets so much heat. You see, when there's no shade, then all the pressure of the sun is right down on your house, and that comes into the house. It makes a big difference. This land that I have down here--I won't go into the dimension, but it goes down to that bridge down there, on across to the railroad over yonder--I'm worried to death for house seats on this road. They'll thin this pine and stuff like they want it. A lot like that is worth all you can get for it because you can fix it just like you want it.

M: How did people choose places for their houses, back when you were young?

I: Well, I'm going to tell you this. They didn't have no choice in my day. That was the white man's choice. A black man didn't know where he was going to stay. He didn't have that much authority to pick his place. This was a dark day back when you're talking about. It wasn't no choice; you didn't have no choice. You see, all the landowners were white, and the colored people just lived with them. All they paid them was a house and what they wanted them to have. It was just the white man's choice because colored people didn't have no choice. What he thought he needed, that's what he wanted. (laughter)

M: Was there a big difference in what you wanted and what he gave you?

I: Why, sure. In fact, I don't know if it was any different or not because, in that day, people didn't have sense enough to want nothing. (laughter) It's funny said, but it's just as true as can be. They didn't have no choice, whatever you thought was alright, they thought was alright.

M: So, most of the people around here were sharecroppers?

I: Oh, well, that's what they named it. It wasn't nothing but just a work, just work where you were clothed and grow you something to eat. It wasn't only sharecrop. When you get to the end of it, there wouldn't be nothing for you. You had you plenty to eat and got clothes you need to wear, and that's about it. Come time to put some money in your pocket, there wasn't no such thing as that.

M: Must have been hard to do your courting when you didn't have any money in your pocket.

I: That's right, and you didn't have no money. The white people say in that day, you didn't need no money, didn't need no money. I reckon you didn't because we got through without it. We had plenty to eat, and clothes such as we wore. They said we didn't need no money. So, that's the way that stuff went.

M: So, you just moved into the houses on the farms you were working on then?

I: That's right. All the colored people, of that day I'm talking about, if you wasn't on this white man's plantation, then you were on the other one's. It wasn't no free people, man to their choice, of the colored people. Oh, man, that's bad to talk about back in then.

M: What other plantations were there besides the Waverly plantation?

I: All around. They're saying now, wherever the different plantations was, they were planted with the Negroes. They had to work that land and do whatever would be necessary to be did. When it come to the end of the year, when it come time to settle, you was to get your just results for whatever you maintained that year. The boss you

worked under would call you up to the house and say, "You done pretty well this year. You liked to paid out, and if you do as well next year, you may pay out." Now, what you owed you didn't know it, and how near you come to paying out you didn't know. What he owed you, you didn't know it. So, it was just one of them things. That's the way it went.

M: You never knew how much you made?

I: No! That's just the way. I come through that; I come through that.

M: Did you ever know anybody who worked on a Cox place?

I: Well, I did know a few. . . . Was it the Jim Cox place?

M: It's the one just below Barton.

I: Well, I know one or two people that lived on his place, but I can't think of them.

M: Was his name Jim Cox?

I: Jim Cox.

M: What kind of things did you have to eat when you were sharecropping?

I: Well, man, we got plenty to eat.

M: Yeah. Did you get to raise a hog or two yourself or did they all belong to the man that owned the farm?

I: No, we wouldn't have that privilege. The boss would raise the hog, and we'd kill them, clean them, put them up, and he'd give us what he wanted us to have.

M: I see. Did your grandmother store food? Did she can? Did she salt meat?

I: Yeah, she'd do some of that. Whenever she would get a chance to do it, she would can things.

M: Did you ever go to school?

I: Yeah, I did. I went to school; I didn't go too far. I didn't get no higher than the seventh grade.

M: What school did you go to?

I: The Waverly School. It used to sit right up here. Course, there's nothing there to show for it now, no more than a house that a colored woman lives in right around the spot that old school used to sit. I did reach the seventh grade.

M: How many months out of a year did you go to school?

I: Well, at that time, we would have an eight-month school.

M: Yeah, and what time did you have to start in the morning?

I: Well, the school hours were nearly like now. The bell would ring for you to go in at eight-thirty. We called it the clock. The only advantage you have now from what you had then was that wherever you lived, you had to walk and you had to leave time enough to be there at eight-thirty. Now, they have transportation to go around and pick the students up.

M: Did you have a different teacher every year?

I: We didn't get one every year. Some of them would stay there two and three and four years. We would have a teacher, sometimes, that would teach school just for some years before the ring was on her finger. We'd have to change.

M: Were they mostly women teachers?

I: Men and women.

M: Did one person teach all the grades?

I: No, we had different grade teachers.

M: Was this a pretty big school?

I: Yeah.

M: Did it have more than one room?

I: Oh, yeah, I think it had five or six to that school.

M: This must have been a real big community.

I: Uh-huh, it was.

M: What kind of subjects did you study?

I: Well, at that time, you would finish school at the eighth grade. If you could get you a school after you get through eighth teaching, you could be some kind of a teacher. Now, you have to finish the twelfth grade and then you've got to take at least two years of college before you're ready to do anything that's accountable for nothing. You can't get nowhere unless you complete the twelfth grade. That's the school requirements, you know. Then you go to colleg : you take college courses for two years. Then probably you come to be recognized to go on into further work.

M: Did you have books in your schoolhouse?

I: Yes, we used to have to tote our books to school and back. We

walked, too. Sometimes we'd go up on a log and slip off and get your feet wet before we'd get there.

M: Did you wear your shoes to school?

I: Wear shoes, boots, and whatever we could get.

M: Did you have to take your shoes off when you got back home and went out to work?

I: Oh, yeah. If it wasn't cold, they wouldn't allow us to wear them out. They'd make us wear our feet instead of our shoes, if it wasn't cold. It really wasn't cold much when it was time for school unless it's the first starting of it. I went to school barefeeted.

M: Did you carry a lunch with you?

I: Yeah, I carried a lunch, such as it was. I carried a piece of bread, a piece of meat, or something like that. It wasn't nothing much, but it was all I could get.

M: Was that enough?

I: That was good meat. Yeah, we couldn't know what a ride was. We lived about three miles out from the school, but we had to get there. We'd leave time enough to make it there on time. When the bell rings, you're supposed to be there.

M: How long did it take you to get there?

I: Well, I couldn't estimate that because sometimes we'd leave running. You see, if you go fast, you'd get there quicker, and if you don't go fast, it'd be longer. So, it's just the kind of thing is according to what gait you did to get there. (laughter)

M: Did you usually take your time?

I: Well, we would if we'd start in time. If we didn't, we'd run to kind of make up some time.

M: What kinds of things are real different today, other than the house that you lived in, the food you ate, and the way you got to school?

I: What kind of things are so much different?

M: Yeah.

I: Well, man, it's just another world now. I don't know but one thing like the day in which I'm talking on. We eat the same, but all the other things are different. We eat the same way. Well, we don't do that neither because in that day, we raised the food at home. We eat from the store now. That's the difference there. The name "eating" is about the same now as it was then. You know, just the eating, but what you eat is different.

M: Did people get together more back in the old days?

I: Oh, yes. People was together then. They're bad now. It's just a dangerous world we're living in now.

M: Did you get together and visit a lot of time?

I: That's right, you take the day in which we live in now, it's about the most dangerous time I ever knew and ever heard of. The young people now, doesn't make no difference what their years, white or black, they is something else than what they were in that day.

From the progress they're making now, it's a poor chance for a better day; I can't see it. There's more education, there's more everything of that kind operating on human people than there was in the day we're speaking of. I reckon, that's why it's so dangerous for life, for people to exist and fellowship with one another. It's just such a different day.

M: What other differences do you see?

I: I just couldn't tell you.

M: There's just too many, huh?

I: I just couldn't tell you. What age are you?

M: I'm twenty-six.

I: Twenty-six. Well, I'll be eighty years old on the eleventh day of next month, and I've experienced something of this world, the past and the present. I've seen enough to know something about what's going on. Twenty-six years old, you have experienced a right smart because in the last years there has been a faster movement among humans than it was in the day before you come in the world. In these twenty-six years that you've been in and grown up large enough in to pay attention to how things were moving, you've got right smart. But, Lord, there's so much yet, so much yet that you're going to learn. Well, like a fellow just said, "You're just entering into wisdom gate." You're going to learn that you don't know, but time will bring things in. That's what time do. Time can carry my life out, and time will bring things in. That's just the way time works. Nobody can hinder that. The Bible said, "Every generation that's born into the world is weaker and wiser." Do you know what that means?

M: No, tell me.

I: Listen how I said it, now. This is what I'm saying, "Every generation that's born into this world is weaker and wiser, weaker and wiser." Wise means got more sense than men going out, men that was born before you. That's what wise means; you got more understanding, more knowledge. You didn't have to grow it; they are born with it.

Now you've experienced this in your life, your little short life. Children now are born. When they're three years old, they'll say and do things that a six-year-old child used to do. You have them experiences, don't you? This is what this means, what I'm talking about. A child three years old now will say things that will stick you up to wonder why he has that much sense, more than a six-year-old child did have. Where do they get it from? They were born with it. He was just born up there; he didn't have to be a long time to get it. It just come in there when he come in. That's on that principle.

Alright. Weaker means they got no account with good strong health and ability. They're weaker. Things take them quicker; things will happen with them quicker. They ain't got the body, the grit, the womanhood, they ain't got the manhood that children had. The least thing will pick them up, when a child use to ride over it and wouldn't have any complaint. That's weaker, and that's the best I can explain it. Can you see that?

M: Yes. Can you think of anything else you'd like to talk about?

I: That's one thing that the Bible, which is all on we build, worked that out for the human people to help them to see the movement of the world, that every generation that's born is succeeding the others that have been born. (laughter) I heard a preacher the other night, and I stuck a pin in that. He said, "A woman that's carrying a child shouldn't drink whiskey if she don't want the child to drink it. Every drink she takes, that child gets something of it from her, and when it is born, she done put the taste in his mouth. She done it carrying him." I heard the preacher say that. "If you don't want your child to drink, don't you drink. When you're drinking, it's doing you so much good, that child that's in you gets a something of that. And when it's born, it's already like that. Then you want to whip him for drinking, and you put it in him." You see what I'm talking about?

M: Yes.

I: I don't want my boy or my girl to drink. If you don't want it, don't you drink it. That's the stopping of it right there. He'll never get the taste when you didn't put it in there in the creating of him. If he get it, it's in him. You can't stop it to save your life, and you don't know when you done it. Most of the people don't know that they did it, before it was born. You can't whip that out; you can't scold it out; you can't fuss it out. It's just there. It's something for you to worry with.

M: Well, I think we should close the interview. I'd like to thank you for the time you've spent with me. I appreciate seeing your view of the older world.

I: Yes, sir. I give some little history of it. I could enlarge on it, but I can't tell it all. It's kind of like a old story. You can't tell it all; you just tell so much and so much.



M: Well, are there some more little parts you'd like to tell me now?

I: Well, I think I've told just about enough facts. What I've told, I'm behind it. I felt like I've told it just like I've experienced it.

M: Well, thank you very much for sharing part of yourself with me.

THTP - Oral History Interview OH 122  
An interview with  
Hallie Hayes Ivy

conducted and edited by  
Peggy Uland Anderson



Hallie Hayes Ivy was born in the community of Waverly, Mississippi in 1900. Her interview addresses the more domestic aspects of a share-cropper's life and provides detailed information on such topics as furnishings of a house, kitchen utensils, and clothing manufacture. She describes the preparation of food, its preservation and storage, and general diet. The account gives many clues to the role of family members in the economic unit and the chores that they performed. Also described in the interview are sorghum making, soap making, and home medicines.

This interview was conducted in Mrs. Ivy's home by Peggy U. Anderson on February 18, 1980.

U: This is an interview with Hallie Hayes Ivy for the Tombigbee Historic Townsites Project by Peggy Uland at Mrs. Ivy's home on February 18, 1980. Her address is Route 2, Box 232, West Point, Mississippi 39773. Her telephone number is 494-6747.

Mrs. Ivy, could you tell me when and where you were born?

I: Well, I was born in 1900. I never did exactly know the date, but my mother said she was able to cook her Christmas dinner after I was born. I believe it was the fourteenth. Back in those days, just a few people could read and write. She didn't keep up with the date being unlearned as she was, but she knew the month. It was in December 1900 that I was born. I guess it's just about two miles across this Highway 50 to the spot that I was born. I was born and reared upon my grandfather's forty acre place. My grandfather's name was Harold Willmons.

We went to a country school. Children from three and four miles away, all of them, would go to this little school between here and where I was born. We had a little one-room school there.

We didn't go to town or to the store like we do now for our food; we raised all the things. We'd have our own meat, such as hogs, chickens and eggs. We would even plant sorghum and make molasses out of it. At that time, that molasses mill was drawn with a mule. The mule pulled that machine all the way around. Somebody'd sit there and feed the sugar cane into the machine. I don't know what it did, but I believe it was better than it is now. We were eating real food; we don't know what we're eating these days. My granddaddy had a big peach orchard. We had plenty of fruits.

After I married, I went where my husband was living. His daddy brought him up on what they called the George Bank's farm. It was all in this district. We stayed there and rented land. We didn't ever do no sharecropping. We'd rent the land that we'd work. I think it was a bale of net cotton for fifteen acres of land. We farmed with mules or horses. We didn't have tractors or nothing like that.

I can remember some things now, and some I done forgot. (laughter) I'm too old to hold everything. I remember when this was an old rock road. There was no pavement, but just rock roads. We were at school that day. A machine come up the road which I reckon was operated by steam or something. I reckon it was coal. I don't know what. Anyhow, smoke was coming out a pipe on the top of that machine. Teacher let us all stand outside and watch that go by. Her name was Arianne Strong.

It was about four miles going toward West Point. With weather like we sometimes was having then, they'd have to put four mules to a

wagon to get through that because it was so muddy. There wasn't no such things as cars. I remember the first car I saw. It was made like what you call hacks or surrey or something way back yonder. It had fringes all around the tip of it. I remember seeing that first one come through here. Because our roads were so bad, if there was such things as cars, they couldn't make it up and down these roads unless it was summertime.

Yeah, I can remember some of the things that I witnessed in life; some of them are gone from me. I'll be honest. I just can't remember them all. As you grow in age, I don't know what happens, but your mind just can't hold things like you used to.

U: Too many things.

I: I guess so. Yes, it is far different now to what I've known it to be. I remember when all of this Highway 50 out here was in timber. Well, I don't know just how many years, but I think it was built in the 1960s. I rode one time going to Columbus on a ferry boat. You'd drive your wagon or buggy or whatever you was in down on that platform, and a man would pull the rope and take you across there to get to the next town. It was so different to what it is now. I've been here long enough to witness all of that.

The most we knew for cooking utensils was iron. I believe it was better for us. We had iron skilletts, frying pans, and iron pots for boiling. We'd use wood stoves. I didn't see this, but my mother said for a long time she didn't even have a stove. They cooked on fireplaces. They had something like a skillet with a lid to brown your food. You put biscuits and the cakes or whatnot on that. She said for a long time she didn't have either one, just had the fireplace. She had no stove.

It is just so far different now to what it was in those days. It is more convenient now. It is more handy for you to handle this push button stuff, but I believe that this old time was the best for your health. We didn't know what it was to have these shiny cook vessels, boilers and things like that. We had to cook off of iron skilletts, iron frying pans, iron bakers. You'd bake your biscuits on something iron that wasn't a pan. You make those biscuits and put them in that instead of putting them in shiny pans to cook. That's the way we come along in life; it's a big change now for us.

U: When you grew up across Highway 50, were your grandparents still alive?

I: No, ma'am. My granddaddy died when I was about five years old. I never did know my grandmother; she was gone already. I didn't know her, but I knew my granddaddy. I can remember him. Her name was Eliza Willmons.

U: Do you remember any stories he ever told you?

- I: Well, yes. My older sister and brother was kind of up in school. They had a geography book, and he could take that book and show us different animals in there. He said he had seen them. The biggest stories I ever remember him telling was naming animals in that book for us and telling us where they were located and everything.
- U: Do you know where he was from?
- I: I really don't know where he was from. He was in slavery.
- U: Was that your mother's father?
- I: My mother's dad.
- U: Did your mother's house that you grew up in as a child have a fireplace that she cooked in or a wood stove?
- I: She had a wood stove. She got her heat from the fireplace but she was cooking on a wood stove. You cut wood to heat the stove. They didn't have no gas expenses. They didn't know anything about that. They cooked with that wood, and they would heat the house with it.
- U: Where would you get the wood?
- I: Well, cut it out there on his place. After I married, we used to use a wood stove. There was plenty of wood around. Didn't have to buy it, just cut it. Put it in the stove and make you a good fire and cook anything you could get to cook.
- U: What kind of wood makes good wood for a wood stove?
- I: Hickory wood and oak. Those are the two good solid woods that they had.
- U: Did you help your mother in the house when you were little?
- I: The biggest I did was nurse the kids. She had children so fast. I did that until I was about twelve years old. Then I helped with the washing, pressing or ironing, and making starch. You take flour and make it up like you're going to make gravy. Add water to it when you get all of the lumps out of the flour and boil it. When you get it boiled, sometimes you put beeswax in it to make it iron smooth. I helped by doing just what I could do.
- U: What did the iron look like?
- I: Smoothing iron? Let me show you one. Some people were here trying to buy it, but I wouldn't sell it. I said, "I'm going to keep that for a souvenir."
- U: It's heavy.
- I: Yeah, it's heavy. Some would be heavier than that. What's that,

five or six pounds? It is so dusty. Eight pounds. There were eight or nine pound ones, and you could get a five pound. The heavier they were the better work they could do.

U: How do you heat this?

I: You get a fire in your fireplace, and set the iron to that fire, but not up against the wood because it would smoke. That iron would get hot. Set it down on the hearth there by the fireplace in close enough for it to get hot. Then in summertime, we would build a fire outside and set the iron to it. Go out there and get the iron, and iron until it get too cool to iron. Take it back and get another. Yes, that's the way we came up.

U: What did you use for an ironing board?

I: Just a piece of plank, any kind of smooth plank. You could get it and wrap it and use it for an ironing board.

U: Where would you get an iron like this?

I: They must have sold it, at that time, in hardwares. I don't know whether you can buy them now. This is a Sheffield. You'd go to town and buy them from the hardware store.

U: Is that the only kind of iron you ever saw when you were little?

I: No, I saw another kind, but it wasn't just like this. It would connect right here and a piece of metal--I reckon it was iron too--would come over that far. You did nothing but catch it in the middle and iron with it. Yeah, I saw another one. Fact, I have another one; I don't know what became of all my old stuff.

When I was nearly grown, I saw stoves some of which would have what you call a warmer across them. You call that a range. You cook your food and set it up in there and it would keep warm. Fact, it would get too hot, and you couldn't hardly eat it. Some of them had something like a tank on the side for your hot water. Some people used the black iron teakettles, which you set on your stove for hot water.

U: Did your mother ever spin or weave?

I: No, she didn't. I never saw one of them, but a cousin, I think, of my mother had a spinning wheel. I didn't ever see it; I just heard her talking about it. You see, women went to work in the fields then. They didn't have time for all this spinning stuff. I heard her say that some of her older relatives used to take that spinning wheel and make thread. She didn't. I don't know how they did it. I don't know how they took care of it after they made it. I reckon they wrapped that thread around something to sew with. She said they used to knit socks and gloves, and caps for the kids, and things like that, but I never remember seeing one of them. I've

been here a long time, but I must of didn't get here in time to know about that.

U: How many children were in your family?

I: There are five of us living now. I have three brothers who are dead and one sister. There was about nine of us, I think.

U: That's a lot.

I: A lot of them. People don't have those many children now, just in spots. They got a way of limiting the kids. They know how many they want or they think they can take care of, and they don't go no farther. But in those days they didn't know nothing but getting them. They are smart to that now.

U: What kind of plates did your mother have in your house when you were little?

I: They called them china plates, but they were just white plain plates. They weren't china, but that's what they called them.

U: Did they have any painted pictures on them or were they plain?

I: Some of them had been painted, but very few. They had flowers part way round. Most of them were just plain white plates, white cups and saucers.

U: Did she have silverware?

I: Yeah, they had knives and forks. Only part of it that was bright like silver was the prongs. The handles would be black. They didn't have stainless steel or nothing like that. All that stuff would have wooden handles, more or less. We've come a long way and still got a long way to go.

U: You helped her iron clothes. Did you help her wash clothes?

I: I did.

U: How do you do that?

I: On rub boards which were a big piece of plank about that wide. It had trenches cut in it. There would be a rise right in the middle of that little trench, just one after another one as long as that board would be. Put it in that tub and scrub. That's what we done. It was hard, but we did it.

U: What kind of soap did you use?

I: My mama made soap. Back since I've been grown, I made it. Save your ashes where you burn your wood in your fireplace. Let them rot. If you dampen them, it wouldn't take them long to rot. Then

you'd spread a bag and sack in the bottom of a basket. That's the way my mother did hers. You just continue to pour water up on them ashes and let it drip through there. You catch that lye and put it in one of these old big round pots. You'd have to have grease. Put it over the fire and get to cooking. It would lather like everything. (laughter) You cook that soap. Then I learned to take Red Devil lye and grease and just whip it up together until it would get hard and make soap. The lady down the road makes some right now. It was good soap. First, drip your lye, and then you make your soap. Build a fire around that pot and cook it until it gets kind of like a rope like molasses. Then it was ready. Washed with it many a day.

U: Did you ever have kerosene lamps?

I: Sure. That's what we had--kerosene lamps. We could take a bottle and get some heavy material like old undershirt tails and things like that. That material had a fleecing on it at that time. It was heavy. You pull off a strip of that and put it together like that, and put that down in that bottle. That kerosene would suck up into that because of the wick. You could light it and have a lamp.

U: Did you have candles?

I: We didn't ever use no candles. I don't remember that. I have to have them now, but when I was growing up I didn't. Nobody was going to cut our lights off; they couldn't cut them off. We had to light them ourselves. (laughter) Now in these days, if they cut the electric or the electric gets cut off by some means, you can't get a light. You have to have candles for that purpose. When I was growing up, we didn't have anything but them lamps made out of snuff bottles. You take the top off of them and put that wick down in there. It would soak on up to the top. Strike a match and you got a lamp. They were very smoky. You couldn't keep walls clean or nothing with them. You could buy a lamp that had a globe with it, and that cut that smoke down. That's the way we went about it.

U: You said your grandfather had a peach orchard. Did your mother ever can fruit?

I: Oh, my goodness! She canned fruit. When she ran out of jars, she used these half-gallon buckets where the top would go down in it like that; she'd can in that. Yes, she canned some fruit, and then she would dry fruit. Those peaches would have to be peeled. I don't know whether she peeled apples or not, but she would peel the peaches. Spread them out in the sunshine on a plank or a piece of tin. Every evening she'd gather them up, rake them all up, and take them inside to keep the dew from falling on them because that would make them dark. She dried fruit by the bushels.

U: Where did she keep canned fruit and dried fruit stored after she made it?

I: She had some shelves built around in the kitchen. She put them on



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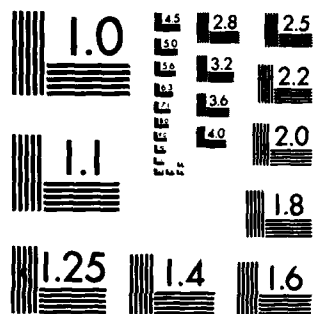
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that. In the wintertime, our houses were so open that they would freeze if you didn't take them inside where the fire was. She'd just have them all under the bed and all around the walls while it was cold. Another thing we used to do was this. You shell you some corn and get some of those rotten ashes and put them in a bag and put that corn and some water in a pot outside. That's the way she cooked, and she would make hominy. It was good, good. (laughter) Put an old ham bone in it or shoulder bone or something. You're talking about good hominy.

U: What other kinds of things did she cook that you liked?

I: Butter roll was one. She'd cook something called a butter roll. It'd be so good. She'd make that with sugar and nutmeg and eggs, too. She'd sweeten it and make as many rolls as she'd want to. Put your butter and milk in there and set it in the stove. The top of it would be just golden brown. She'd make such as you'd call a berry pie. We'd pick berries and can them. She'd make blackberry pie or dewberry pie. I never did know her to make mulberry pie.

U: Who went and got the berries?

I: The children, I guess. Yeah, we picked them berries because we loved them pies. They had sugar in them. (laughter) Yeah, we did the berry picking. If we picked them by the water buckersfull, she'd can them. But if we just wanted a pie, we'd get us a quart cup or tin bucket or something and go out there in them bushes and get them berries. Yeah, she used to make her own jelly, and I made mine up until I got so I was afraid to go up in the bushes and pick berries. You can make it out of apples' hulls and cores, and you can make it from berries. Berry jelly is the best jelly you want to eat; I just love it. There's some vines that grow out in the woods that they call the muscodine vine. It'd have big berries about like the size of the end of my thumb. That's some more good jelly. We just had plenty to eat all the time, such as it was. Our health was better, I know that. Now everything we eat is from these stores, you can't find a well person, hardly. It looks like something's wrong with everybody.

U: Where would you get flour and cornmeal?

I: Well, they had a gristmill. Wash Davis, a man who lived between here and West Point at that time, had a gristmill. Nathan Mathis had one. You'd sell your corn. You'd take it up there. You'd take a bushel of corn, and it would turn over a bushel and a peck. You get your amount back and the extra peck went to whoever it was that had the gristmill. That's the way he got his peck. Of course, you'd have to go to town for flour. I never saw wheat grow, if they were growing it at the time; we weren't.

U: So, you'd go to West Point?

I: West Point, that was our town.

U: How much flour would you buy?

I: Most times we'd have a barrel and what you'd call a half of a barrel. That's the way they bought it.

U: Did you eat cornmeal more than you did flour since you didn't have to buy that?

I: My daddy just loved flour; he didn't like no meal. I've never known my mother to cook that; she didn't cook corn bread and flour bread because he loved flour bread. We had plenty of milk and butter and meal so she cooked a pan of corn bread and a pan of biscuits all the time. He wasn't going to eat corn bread unless he couldn't get around it. That's the way it was.

U: Did you milk your own cows?

I: Yes ma'am. Milked them and we had a churn. You'd churn in a big jar, something like four or five gallons. They didn't have an electric churn. If they did, I didn't know about it. We had something we called a dasher. You put it in there and work it up and down like that until the butter come out of that milk. You take your butter off, and wash the milk out of it, pound it up, and put it up. Sometimes we'd run out of lard and have to cook with that butter. It makes good corn bread.

U: How would you keep the milk cold?

I: Didn't have no way of keeping it cold. (laughter) At that time, we had what you call a cistern well with a hole dug in the ground. There was a bucket on each end of that rope. You'd let one down and bring the other one up. My daddy had something he'd lay across that well with cords on it. Put the milk in buckets and let it down in the well. It didn't go to the water, but it kept cool like that. We didn't have nothing to keep nothing cool. My father's name was George Hayes.

U: Was the well lined with wood?

I: Some of them was; I think ours was lined with wood, if I make no mistake. But I have seen them lined with bricks.

U: Was a butter churn made out of wood or was it partially metal?

I: Some of them was made from cedar. That's what they would churn in. Some of them would be stone milk jars. I have one now out there in storage. Most people at that time had what you call a cedar churn. It was pretty, and it had brass rings all around it. Some of the dashers were round and had holes bored through them, and some of them were made like a cross. That milk come up between there. Churn that milk and get all that good butter. I wish I had some now. (laughter) It was some good milk and some good butter. Now we have to buy all of that. Of course, we just recently got rid of

our cow. We had cows, but we had stopped milking long before we sold them. My husband got sick and had to go in the hospital and I couldn't see after them. When he came out, he sold them. I did enjoy good milk and butter from that in those days.

U: Do you get cream that way?

I: Sure, that cream would rise on the milk as soon as it would get cool enough for it to separate. The cream would come to the top and the milk would be at the bottom. We'd have all the cream that we'd want.

U: What did your mom use cream for? Did she save it for something special?

I: She didn't do anything with it other than for coffee. She liked cream in her coffee. That's the biggest way I've ever heard her use cream.

U: Were there places to make molasses around here?

I: Well, I knew two close by. Percy Halbert had one down there on the railroad south of here. A cousin of mine had a mill. They'd bring the mills wherever you want to make molasses, and then sometime you'd haul this cane to that mill. They'd get all that juice out of it. You'd catch it in a container. You take that juice and strain it. You had a big barrel sitting near the pan that you make the molasses in. They put it in that pan and cook it. All that foam and skim would raise up on top of it. They skim that off and throw it away, and they cooked it down to molasses. It was so good.

U: Is there a difference between sorghum and ribbon cane?

I: Much different. Ribbon cane is just so sweet. I don't care a thing for it. I do love my sorghum molasses. They called it sorghum cane at that time.

U: If any of the kids were sick, did your mother ever make up her own remedies or did she go buy medicine in town?

I: For colds and fever, she'd make that medicine herself. I done forgot what she made it out of. This old yellow top, dog fennel, is a flower but it grows wild. You could get enough of it, and boil that weed and bathe the children in that. It was good for fevers. She would use tallow when they have colds. I done forgot what all she would put in that. Keep them dressed with that and keep them in the bed. They didn't have too much doctor attention.

U: Did she ever buy store medicine?

I: Well, sometimes she would, but not too often. No, she'd make that medicine. Just go out there and get jimson weed and that old yellow flower I spoke of and boil it in a big washpot. Take it and heat it

and give us baths in that. That was so good for colds and fever, too. Didn't do much buying at drugstores; they didn't make much off them because they'd make the medicine themselves.

U: When your mother had her children, did she have them at home?

I: Sure! They had what you call grannys in those days, doctor women. They didn't go to school for it, but somehow or other they learnt how to deliver babies. I don't reckon my mother ever been to a hospital. I know she hasn't. She had all her children at home.

U: Would those women just come house to house for whoever needed them?

I: That's right, whoever needed them. I remember my mother having a baby once and another lady was in labor, too. This old lady took care of my mother, and she went from there to take care of the other lady. Gave the baby the same name. You'd go get them wherever they lived. Didn't have any other way to go except ride a mule. They had some buggies. A little girl was put up behind one of those mules to bring her in. I don't know what she done, but she delivered that baby. No, they didn't go to a hospital for babies.

U: You said you went to school not far from where you lived. Was that a one-room school?

I: One-room school.

U: What was that like?

I: It was like a old hut. (laughter) Wind was blowing all around the bottom of it and coming in on you. They had heaters in there. The teacher would have the bigger boys go out in the woods and tote up wood in the evening for tomorrow. They'd pile it up there in the little school, and the next day we'd have a fire. Sometimes, he'd have to change the children sitting back from the fire. Sometimes they'd sit there near the heater. We had a hard way, but we made it.

U: Did you have books and blackboards?

I: Had blackboards and books, wherever you could get books. They didn't furnish books, at that time. Some of the kids would have books and some would have to share with each other.

U: What kind of subjects did you study?

I: The first book we had was a primer. Then, we had the first reader, then the second, third, fourth, and on up; I think we went to the eighth out here. Some of the kids were nice enough to let the others have their books overnight. Some just didn't have books; they got it the best way they could. I never would have my full supply. We did pretty good at it though, but we were just behind and never did catch up. Somehow or other we made it with God's help. (laughter)

U: Do you remember any of your teachers?

I: I remember my first teacher more so than I do any other. I've forgotten my teachers. A lady named Arianne Strong was my first teacher. I went to Bob Mosby and Alice Gree. I just done forgot their names, I know my first teacher was named Arianne Strong, a minister's daughter.

U: Did your mother have a garden?

I: A year-round garden. My dad would cut poles and put them in the ground and just take pine tags and cover that over. On the north side, he'd just build up around it with the pine tags and them greens stayed up under there. I don't care how deep the snow was; you could go there and get you some greens to eat. Really! She kept a garden all the time.

U: What kind of things did she grow?

I: She grew cabbages, collards, turnips, and mustard, rape, onions, and white potatoes. They'd have a patch outside the garden for sweet potatoes. The way they took care of those white potatoes was you could put them up under the house where they would keep dry. You'd leave the potatoes there through the winter. For the sweet potatoes, they built something like a little platform. They put cornstalks and pine straws on top of that. Then they'd wrap their potatoes up around that pole which was right down through the center. They wrapped that up then with pine straw, get some constalks and build all around it, and throw dirt on it. You'd have what they called a door to go in. I never did go in there; I was scared of it. You couldn't go in, but you could reach up in there and get those potatoes. We called it a potato kiln.

U: What?

I: A potato kiln. That's how they took care of their potatoes. Had a way of keeping them dry with that straw and cornstalks. As long as you'd keep them dry, they'd keep because they were like buried. In fact, my husband did that with turnips one year. He packed up a lot of turnips. Before it's get too cold, he'd cut the tops off them turnips and would fix them just like they would them potatoes. Cover them with dirt. Pull it out in the wintertime, and it would be white, it wouldn't be green salad. We had no other way to keep them. That's the way we kept them. Bank them up in what we call potato kilns, turnip banks, and whatever. We had greens right on through the year. She always would have a year-round garden. Course, he would shelter them in the wintertime. Some mornings there'd be snow on the ground, and she'd go out there and get a bucket of greens. (laughter)

U: In the kitchen where your mother had things like sugar, and flour, and things you bake with, what kind of containers did she keep those in?

I: Fruit jars.

U: Fruit jars?

I: Yeah, she'd keep her sugar in a stone jar, I think, but she would have these fruit jars to put other things in. Label them and stick them in. Mostly we used tin cans. We used to get a can of salmon a lot. That would be special food. (laughter) We'd cut those cans up for cups. Mama would mash all that little edge down and make cups for us to drink milk from. We had tin plates to eat out of. The kids didn't hardly use the dishes that she would keep for company or something like that. We had tin cups. You could buy tin cups at that time with handles on them. It looks like milk drank better out of that than it did anything. (laughter)

U: Would it keep it cold?

I: Well, I guess so. We'd only use them when we'd be eating. Instead of glasses, we used mostly tin cups.

U: Did she have glasses that she kept for company?

I: Yeah, she sure did. We'd break them up so bad that she'd get us cups to drink out of.

U: When a child broke a glass, where did she put trash like that? Did she have a place that she took the trash or did you bury it?

I: No, she had a special place. She'd pile it way out from the house, because we went barefooted all the time until it got cold. To keep us from cutting our feet so on glass, she just had a pile out from the house. She didn't bury it.

U: Did you keep livestock at your house besides cows?

I: Nothing but hogs, cows, chickens and mules. Yeah, we had a place for that.

U: Did you keep the chickens and eggs just for your family or did you sell eggs?

I: That's all. We just kept them for our use. No, we didn't ever sell none that I know about; we'd keep them for the house.

U: Was your dad a farmer?

I: He was. One time he went to Alabama as a miner, but he didn't stay up there but about two years. He got his leg broke; a rock or a piece of coal or something fell on his leg. Then he came back to the country and went back to farming. I never knowed him to do much of anything but farming.

U: Did your mother and any of the children help him farm?



I: All of us. Soon as we got large enough or old enough, we'd be out there with a hoe and picking cotton too.

U: What kind of tools do you use to farm cotton?

I: A turning plow, a buster plow, a harrow, and a sweepstock. That's the kind we used.

U: Are they wood?

I: Well, the beams would be wood, but they'd have a steel or iron blade to throw the dirt.

U: When you pick cotton do you put it in a bag?

I: Put it in a long old bag. That's right. Drag it behind you. I never could do much of that, but I did a lot of it. I'd give out in my back.

U: Have you ever seen anybody use baskets for that?

I: Yes goodness. They picked that cotton and got their sack full. Then they'd go empty it over in that basket.

U: What were they made of?

I: Oakwood, but they'd have it in splits, small pieces like that. They'd clamp it or do something with it and make that basket round. I never knowed how to do it, but I've seen a many a one use them to make those baskets.

U: Would people in the neighborhood make those and you could get those?

I: No, some people made them and sold them for a few cents apiece. You had to pay fifty cents for those baskets. They went higher than that, but I'm talking about in the old days. They sold them baskets. If you didn't know how to make one, you'd have to buy yours.

U: What was the inside of your house like? Was it several rooms down-stairs or one big room?

I: We didn't ever live in a two-story or nothing like that. It would be rooms with partitions between them like this. They were great big rooms, 16'x 16'. You could just put a lot of things in there before you'd get it full. (laughter) Sometimes you could look through the floor and see the chickens. Up above, you could look and see the stars. It was just owing to what kind of house you're working in.

U: Did any of them ever have a loft to sleep in?

I: All the houses I ever lived in had lofts. I had a sister-in-law whose kitchen was built off from the house. It didn't even have a

floor, just the ground. There was no loft either. I never lived in one of those kinds; I guess I was just a lucky one.

U: It must be inconvenient to have the kitchen off from the house.

I: To me it would be ill convenient, but that's the way they used to build them with the house here and the kitchen sitting out there. I remember my mother having a kitchen like that, but it wasn't too far. Some planks were between that house and the kitchen, and you could walk on those planks into the kitchen or come out of the kitchen into the house. I knowed a man, old man Squire Steppe, whose kitchen was as far from this house--as my garden is from my house. (laughter)

U: Why did they do that?

I: I don't know. I guess they had it for fire protection. I don't know why they did that. A lot of people had houses off in one spot and the kitchen over there. I saw a lot of that.

U: You said you'd keep white potatoes under the house. Was your house off the ground?

I: Oh yeah, your house would be up on blocks. It's just lately they come out putting it down with the ground. Your house would have blocks under it, and you could get under there and spread those potatoes under there. As long as you kept them dry, they would keep. I guess when it would come a freeze, it might would ruin, but I don't know. I don't think they even covered them up; they just put them under there. As much as I can remember, that's what they did.

U: Why would you keep your house off the ground?

I: I just don't know that; I don't know why they did that. But you never saw a house built level with the ground back in that time. There were big blocks up under their house.

U: Did you ever hide or play under there?

I: Sure did. Yeah, we sure would play under there. (laughter)

U: Was your furniture store-bought or was it handmade?

I: I didn't never have any handmade furniture. I don't remember my mother having any. They had to buy beds, dressers, chairs, and something you call a washstand. A bed, dresser and washstand were the best of the furniture for the bedroom. They didn't have any living rooms at that time.

U: Where did everybody sit in the evening then?

I: Outdoors, in the open air.

U: Did you have a porch?

I: Yeah, we had a long porch. Sure did. Don't care too much for sitting in the house now. I told them I was raised outside and that's where I like it. (laughter)

U: Was there a pitcher and bowl with the washstand?

I: Sure, had a pitcher and a bowl sitting on the washstand.

U: What were they made out of?

I: I guess it was china, something like that middle plate there on that tier tray.

U: So, it'd just be white china.

I: Yeah, that's what they were made out of.

U: When you sat out on the porch at night, did anybody ever play music?

I: Mosquitos would eat you up. You'd have to build you a big smoke. (laughter) We'd sit out there, but we wouldn't have no music. I don't remember my mother having nothing like music. Make a big smoke and sit out there in the cool air. That's how we got cool then. It would be so hot.

U: Did your mother raise herbs in her garden?

I: No, she didn't raise herbs. She had a bunch of garlic in the corner of her garden. I don't know of any herbs she raised.

U: Would she buy things like that?

I: No, she didn't use them. I don't guess she used them, because I don't remember her ever buying any.

U: Did you ever go fishing when you were little?

I: Sure did. I like to fish even now; I'm just afraid I'd fall in the river or creek, but I like that. We'd just take a straight pin and tie some thread on the end with the head of the pin and bend that pin over in the form of a hook. We used to catch perches like my hand. They'd pull out with that little pin hook.

U: Did you have a pond that you fished in?

I: No pond, just a ditch that went down through the field, down in the bottom part of the land. We didn't have a pond. Of course, I had one when I was over there on the hill, but when I was growing up, we didn't have a pond, just a ditch. It held water winter and summer so we'd fish in it.

U: Did you ever fish in the Tombigbee?

I: I have. I don't like it though. I never caught nothing there in my life, but I sure used to fish there. I don't like fishing on big streams. I'm afraid of water. I can't swim.

U: Did many kids learn how to swim when you were little?

I: Yeah, the boys would, but I don't know of any girls swimming. The boys would go swimming; I don't remember girls swimming. I guess maybe that's why I don't know how.

U: Do you ever remember boats on the Tombigbee when you were little?

I: No, I don't. I saw one boat come through and I was grown then.

U: What kind of boat was that?

I: I don't know. It wasn't a big boat. I remember them turning this bridge down here on the river, straight up and down the river. The boat would come in on the side of it. I never saw no boats out there. I don't know. I guess they might have had them, but I don't remember.

U: Did you ever hear of anybody who knew of any?

I: No, I don't remember nothing like that.

U: When you said you were grown, how old were you?

I: I was coming sixteen years when I married. (laughter)

U: That's young.

I: So young. I didn't know any better. I didn't have no other choice. I married in October, and I was sixteen that coming December. That's the way they were marrying then. They didn't have no other choice. They didn't go to college. I don't know if any of them went in town, because I was in the rural. People probably put their children through college, but I just don't know about that. I never went to college myself. I didn't hear of none of the rest of my mates going. When they got to be sixteen or seventeen years old, they was getting a husband. They just didn't know any better.

U: When you saw this boat, you weren't married yet?

I: No, it's been since I been married. Yeah, I saw the boat since I been married. I've seen lots of boats, but they wasn't in the Tombigbee. I used to go up to St. Louis where my sister lived every year before my mother passed. We used to see all kind of boats up there on the Mississippi.

U: How did you meet your husband?

I: At school. Yeah, met him at school. We weren't very far apart. We could have met at his house, or he could have been at mine, but that's where we met, at the one-room school up here.

U: So, you've known him almost all your life?

I: Right, sure have.

U: Did you court?

I: I reckon I did. I called it courting. (laughter)

U: Do you have any children?

I: I'm the mother of two, but I didn't raise them. On my own, I raised four of my niece's children after she passed. I'm the mother of two boys. I married at sixteen, and I had a child at eighteen, I think, and the other one must have been at twenty. My children came in eight months. In that time, they didn't develop kids like they do now. They put them in the incubator and make them be more like a child. I've heard of them surviving from six or seven months. I had a sister-in-law that had one at seven months and he's living now. They didn't develop kids like they do now. At least the people in the country didn't; I don't know about the people in the town. I've always been a country gal.

U: Did you have a midwife?

I: That's all I had. That's the only way I had it. Yeah, I had a sister-in-law. She's dead now. She was the mother of eleven children; and she had all of them at home with a midwife.

U: Did the house that you lived in when you were a child have wood floors or did it have rugs?

I: It didn't have rugs, just wooden floors. They did refloor it a long time after I first remembered it, but the floor would get bad, and you could sit up in the house and look down on your chickens under there after they passed by the crack. That's right. No, I never lived in a house without a floor and without a loft.

U: And you said it had a fireplace in it?

I: It did.

U: What room was the fireplace in?

I: Well, my mother's house had a fireplace on each end of that house. I think it was two rooms and a kitchen, and there was a chimney in each end of the house.

U: Did it have a hallway in it?

I: It did.

U: Was it open?

I: Yeah, it was open. She raised all nine of us in that two-room house. Those rooms, like I said, were sixteen by sixteen feet. They were large rooms, and you could put two and three beds in either room.

U: When you were a child, what kind of games did you play with your brothers and sisters?

I: Well, we played hide-and-seek, and marbles, and played ball. That's about it.

U: What kind of ball?

I: We'd make our ball; I reckon it's called softball. You just get a hickory nut or something solid and go around that with rags and sew them together and make that ball. At school the boys had baseballs; the game we were playing was baseball. There was no football, basketball, volleyball, or anything like that. That's all we knew at that time.

U: Did your mother make any of your clothing?

I: She made just about all of them. She did her own sewing; she didn't have anybody to sew for her. She wasn't a seamstress, but she could sew. She'd sew for other people.

U: Did she have a sewing machine?

I: She did.

U: What was that like? Did you work it with your feet?

I: That's right. It was a peddler, made on a sort of table with a hollow place. I don't know how you operate that thing, but anyhow, the head of the machine which you sew with would be down in the body of it. You could pull it up and it had a belt on the wheel. You could change the needles if you broke one. Long as I can remember, that's the way she sewed. She had a Singer machine. She used to sew for herself and the kids and for other people.

U: Where did she buy cloth?

I: West Point and Columbus, but West Point was our regular town. Sometimes they would go to Columbus, but not too often.

U: What did you do at Christmastime?

I: Oh, we'd have a ball. (laughter) Christmas was a big day with us. There used to be a depot down here at Waverly. The grownups would go down there and have drum beating and dancing and goings on. The kids would be so rejoicing over their Santa Claus that they'd just

be home playing with that. I never did know my mother to take us to anything like that, but they would go down there first Christmas day. They'd have food, food, food.

U: Did they do that any other time of the year?

I: Christmastime and on the eighth day of May. This old white man that owned this mansion would give the people that lived on his plantation a cow, a hog, or something to barbeque. People from all far and near around in our district would be there. They'd be beating drums and wrapping the maypole and have a big time. He gave that for his people to have just for that holiday. I think it was the eighth of May, and they'd have some fun there.

U: How do you wrap a maypole?

I: You've never seen one?

U: No.

I: Oh my goodness, you're late. (laughter) Well, it's a tall old pole. I don't know how many strings would be connected to that pole, but that's a tall old pole put in the ground. You stand it upright. All these different ribbons would be tacked one on top of the other on top of the pole. I don't know how many it would take to play it. You catch a ribbon and I catch a ribbon; you go that way and I come this way and we was wrapping that pole. It would be so many out there doing it, but I done forgot how many. It's pretty.

U: Were the ribbons all different colors?

I: Different colors, that's what they were.

U: Do they play that all day long?

I: They play until they get tired and change up. (laughter) Beat the drums and dance around the pole and like that. You couldn't play that all day long; you'd fall out.

U: Did you ever get to go to one of those?

I: Oh yeah, I was grown before they stopped doing that around here. Sure did. Yeah, I've seen a many a one wrapped. Wrapping the maypole.

U: What kind of drums did they play?

I: They were little round drums about that big. They had one great big base drum, and all the others weren't so large. I don't know what the name of them was. They'd be playing those drums and dancing and going on.

U: Do you know what they were made out of?

- I: Looked like canvas to me; I don't know. That's what it looked like. I don't just know what it was. It was made out of something like canvas.
- U: Did people ever play drums at their house or just on the special days?
- I: No, just on the special days. I don't know of nobody that played them at home. It was these special days they would play them on. If I make no mistake, it was the eighth day of May. People would be there by the gang. They'd come all out of the Prairie and everywhere. There'd be free dinner. They had something they called gumbo soup, I think. They'd make that in washpots. They'd kill that cow or hog or whatever it was and barbeque that on the pit. They had a hole in the ground and something like a screen over it, but it was larger and wider than that. They'd lay the meat on it and cook it, and they'd make a sauce to keep it basted with. You're talking about good times; that was good times.
- U: Lots of good food?
- I: It was. Yeah, the women would bring cakes and pies and the men would be cooking the meat. Yeah, they'd have good times eating and drinking. (laughter)
- U: Did your mother's house have windows?
- I: They had windows, but they were made just like a door. There wasn't glass in it. It was pretty good size. It'd come together in the middle, and you open it from the middle and swing it back like that. They didn't have screens or anything like that.
- U: Did you have chores that you had to do around the house?
- I: We had to pick up chips, get in water, and during the winter season we'd tote in the wood for the fireplace. That was about all the chores other than milking cows. We'd milk; we only did that in the morning.
- U: Did you have a bathtub that you ever brought water into?
- I: No, we didn't have no bathtub; we had to go out there to the well and draw water and heat that water and put it in one of these old washtubs. Did you ever see a galvanized tub?
- U: Yes.
- I: That's how we got our bath. We'd stand up in there, if we couldn't sit down; very few folks can. We'd take our bath like that. That would come ever Saturday night.
- U: Did you ever sit that in front of the fireplace so that it was warm?



I: In the wintertime when we would bathe. No, we didn't have anything like a bathtub. Down here at the mansion, they got their original bathtub. They did the last time I was there. I think it was made out of copper, if I make no mistake. It was sitting out there on the back porch. I haven't been in there. It was made out of something that looked like copper. They had what I reckon you'd call a bung to fill that hole where the water drains out instead of putting a rubber or something over it. They had a piece of wood carved to fit that place. The washhouse was down under the hill from their house. Way back, that brick building across the road from the mansion was where they took their baths.

U: Did your mother ever have any wooden utensils in the kitchen, like wooden spoons?

I: She had a wooden spoon and a wooden tray that she'd make her bread in. It was a long thing, kind of keened at each end; that was her bread pan where she made up her bread. I remember her having a wooden spoon. That's about all I can remember wooden that she used.

U: What kind of pans did she bake the bread in?

I: Frying pans and muffin rings. They were all made out of iron. She had just tin pans sometimes, those long biscuit pans. She'd bake bread in that sometimes.

U: Did your dad have a smokehouse?

I: Sure, it was where he kept all them good old hams and shoulders and middlings. Yeah, he had a smokehouse. He'd keep his molasses and meat and flour and meal out there.

U: Did he store it on shelves?

I: No. First after he killed his meat, he'd let it chill the night and tomorrow or sometime later he'd put it in salt. He had big long meat boxes. He'd put that meat in there for five or six weeks, covered over with salt. Then take it up there and wash it and hang it up in the smokehouse. Get chips and make a smoke in there and smoke that meat. That's the way they preserved their meat; they kept it hanging up.

U: Did it have a dirt floor?

I: That's what it was--dirt floor in the smokehouse.

U: Did he keep molasses and flour in there?

I: He did.

U: Where?

I: Sitting around in the smokehouse.

U: Just sitting in barrels on the floor?

I: Yes, that's right. Keep them covered over, but that's what they had.

U: Did it get to where it smelled smoky?

I: Well, I don't remember that part; it was good to me. (laughter)  
The molasses would be in a barrel, and the flour and the meal would be in the barrels, or else these fifty pound cans with a top on them.

U: Tin cans?

I: Yes, that's right. She kept such as the coffee and sugar and baking powder and soda in the kitchen, but that food all would be locked up out there in the smokehouse.

U: You kept it locked up?

I: Oh yeah, kept a lock on it.

U: What kind of lock, like a padlock?

I: No, it was something you call a spring lock. There's one out there on my well house. It wasn't a padlock.

U: Did you have a well house where you grew up?

I: No well house whatever. Seems like there was a shelter over it, though. Yeah, it had a shelter over it. That was just a hole in the ground with something like a wheel up there for that rope to go through to pull this bucket up.

U: Are mosquitos bad in the summer?

I: They are. Yes goodness, they're so bad. Very few of them get in the house, but you can't sit out much in the summertime late in the evening. Mosquitos are so bad that if you don't make a smoke, you can't make it. I don't know why they're so bad. There's one or two in here now. It ain't been long since I sprayed my room. One'll be singing around my head every night.

U: Before they had insect spray, was there anything you could put on you that kept mosquitos away?

I: No, there wasn't. You just had to make you a big smoke. That's the only thing that kept the mosquitos away. At that time, even as bad as insects were, we didn't know what screens were. You know we caught it hard, fanning flies in the evening. Did that a long, long time before I had screens.

U: Are there any other bugs that are bad in the summer?

I: Ants, they're bad. These old ant mounds are plentiful around here.

I don't know of anything else that'll worry you as bad as mosquito and something they call a black gnat. They're bad sometimes but not like the mosquitos.

U: You said when you were little you went and picked berries for pies. Did you ever collect nuts?

I: Yes, we'd go pick up scaly barks.

U: What's that?

I: It's something like a hickory nut only it's bigger, and the goodies of them are big. They are so good to eat. When I was a kid, we'd get them and put them up and keep them for winter. Come from school at night, we'd have scaly bark cracking. (laughter) If you get tired of eating peanuts, go crack scaly barks.

U: Did your dad raise peanuts?

I: Oh yeah, he raised peanuts.

U: Where did your dad sell his cotton and peanuts?

I: He didn't sell peanuts, but his cotton he sold up here at West Point.

U: Where did he take it to have it ginned?

I: Well, they had gins around through the country and in town, too. Wash Davis, a man that lived between here and West Point, ran a cotton gin. They've got a lot of greens over by the store. I think that boy sold that spot where the store is, but he's got a big vegetable farm right behind it. He's got a lot of greens now, I imagine. Old man Wash is dead. This is his grandson that has the vegetable garden. He doesn't raise anything in his garden but turnips and collards, I don't think.

U: When you were little did your mother ever tell you bedtime stories?

I: No, never did. I don't remember her telling me stories at night. No, I don't remember that part.

U: Did she ever sing around the house?

I: I never could sing, but in my way. We'd sometimes have a little club singing, but we didn't go out to sing or nothing like that. These children there together had to do something for amusement, at that time, we didn't have any music. My mama had something she called a telescope. You could look through it here, and it had a little thing out on it like that at the end where you could place some pictures. They would be great big when you looked through that at them. She had that for amusement, but I don't know of anything else she had. We used to look at foreign countries through that,

all kind of pictures. A man came through selling them, and my daddy bought one. They called it a telescope. It was much joy to have it. You'd see places you never would have seen or wouldn't be able to go to. When you see them through that glass by putting it over your eyes like that; it'd develop into big pictures. It wouldn't be no size when you were just looking at that card. When you'd put it in that thing and look through, it'd be great big pictures. Some of them would be moving pictures. Yeah, we got a big kick out of that.

U: Were there people who came around like traders from house to house and sold things?

I: Yeah, they called them peddlers. Sure did. I remember when these old covered wagons used to come through. They'd have horses and mules pulling it. Whole families would be in them, and they called them gypsies. People were afraid of them; they didn't get into too many houses. They'd just be trying. They wouldn't come in there and leave without taking something. They gonna take something. I was a kid at that time. They said, "If gypsy wagon show up, you better get on in the house and fasten up." (laughter) A lady up the road from where we were living had some money. I don't reckon it was too much, but it was hers. The gypsies had her smoking a pipe and watching that smoke or something. I done forgot just how it go. When those folks left, her money left. You know, they were fast enough to catch them. Down here across from that white house on the left going down the road, a white family lived there called Usery, something like that. She was cooking for them. She didn't have a telephone, and she had to walk way down here and get him to try to trace those people. They caught them at the Alabama line. They got her money back, I think, if I make no mistake.

U: What kind of things did peddlers sell?

I: They sold such as bedspreads, curtains, scarves. The last time I remember them coming in, they were selling clothes. A lady over there used to buy a lot of them. But they had them so high, you could go to town and get them for less money. People soon stopped fooling with it. I never did fool with it. They'd sell such as bedspreads. They used to set pillows up on the bed. You have a pillow to lay your head on and another sitting up at the head of the bed. You had something you call shams to put on it; it looked pretty. Way back that's what they would be selling.

U: Did they sell kitchen things?

I: I don't remember that. I don't remember them selling anything but spreads and scarves and things like that. I don't know of any who came through selling anything for the kitchen.

U: When your dad or mother went to West Point to buy supplies, how often would they go and would you get to go along?

I: Very seldom. They'd go something like twice a month. My daddy did

all of that. They didn't go until they'd get through gathering the crop. In the fall of the year, they would go to town to buy clothes and shoes and things for us to wear to school.

No, my mama would never fool with us. There used to be circus shows come through, and they'd have all kind of animals and clowns and things. She had taken us to town once to a circus show. We went and got us some cheese and crackers, and we was all sitting in the wagon having a big time. The wagon was parked near the railroad, and the train came through and scared the horses. She was out on the show ground, I reckon. They didn't have the horses hooked up to the wagon, but somehow or other they like to turned that wagon over. He came back to see about us before she did. There was such a cursing. He said, "Ain't got time to fool with the children." She said, "They yours like they is mine." (laughter) "You didn't have anything else to do but come to see about them." He fussed all day long. She didn't believe in carrying kids with her where she went. She'd leave them kids at home. She worried enough with them at the house.

U: Was that the only circus you ever saw when you were a child?

I: Oh no, I saw many of them. She'd carry us to something like that. We went to Barnum and Bailey, and Robinson. I don't know how many I went to. This particular day the horses like to hurt us, but they didn't, thank God.

U: Was that in West Point?

I: All in West Point. I never been to a circus in Columbus.

U: Were there things like county fairs that you could go to?

I: No, not when I was coming up. Until I got grown I never did witness a fair. I don't remember it when I was a kid. They used to have them over here every fall in West Point, and we participated in them. They'd have booths and all kind of canned food and needlework and clothing, too. You'd get prizes for the one that had the better prepared piece. We used to get prizes on cakes, pies, jelly and whatnot. We participated in that, but that's been since I've been grown. I won many a blue ribbon on canned okra and jellies. I don't remember making a cake or nothing, but a lot of people did. They done stopped that; I don't know why. They still have them in Columbus though, but I never go to them. They'd have it every fall. It starts in September or October.

Different clubs would have different booths. It's just a room decorated with shelves and everything to put this fruit and stuff on. Then it'd have a place for you to put your sewing and everything like that. I did win on a dress I once made out of a flour sack. You know they used to pack flour in beautiful material when you got it in twelve and twenty-four pound sacks, but they don't do that no more. You can just get a plain white sack of flour; it'll all be in paper more or less.

U: Was it painted?

I: That's what I mean, it was printed. I remember winning a blue ribbon on a flour sack dress once. That's what they wanted you to make them out of, that kind of material. Take nothing and make something out of it.

U: Did your mother ever make sourdough bread?

I: No, I never did remember that. She was a good old cook, but I don't remember her making no sourdough bread. In fact, she never did make a light bread. I don't remember her cooking no light bread. My sister-in-law could make it, and my sister makes her own rolls.

We made that tier plate in the homemaker's club. Several of us had those trays. In this club, we made silver trays; I got one on my table in there now. We used to make plenty of different things. I haven't got any of that now, but I used to be in the racket. I got too old to fool with it now. They don't have these fairs like they used to.

U: Did your mother have flowers around her house?

I: Oh, she loved flowers. Yes, she did. She didn't fool with no inside flowers, but she'd have such beautiful outside gardens. They'd be pretty. Mine have gone down this time; they ain't nothing. I reckon I let them stay out too long.

U: What kind of flowers did she have?

I: She had zinnias and touch-me-nots. I can't remember now, but she would have a beautiful flower garden on the outside.

U: Did the yard have grass or was it bare?

I: It was bare. Didn't use no grass yards then. They kept those yards clean.

U: I can't think of anything else right now unless you can think of some other thing to tell me.

I: I don't know nothing really.

U: Thank you very much for everything you've told me. You've told me a lot about what it was like to live right after the turn of the century. Thank you very much for both myself and the Project.

I: Well, thank you, I enjoyed it.

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